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Full Name of Author — Nom complet de l'auteur

ABIOSEH MICHAEL PORTER

Date of Birth — Date de naissance
4 FEBRUARY 1952

Country of Birth — Lieu de naissance
SIERRA LEONE

Permanent Address — Résidence fixe
11, RICHARD STREET, FREETOWN
SIERRA LEONE

Title of Thesis — Titre de la thèse
WEST AFRICAN FICTION AND GENERIC CRITICISM: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

University — Université
ALBERTA

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Name of Supervisor — Nom du directeur de thèse
DR. S. H. ARNOLD

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by

ABIOSEH MICHAEL PORTER

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NAME OF AUTHOR ABIOSEH MICHAEL PORTER

TITLE OF THESIS WEST AFRICAN FICTION AND GENERIC CRITICISM: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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(SIGNED) M Porter

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

11, Richard Street

Freetown

Sierra Leone

DATED 24 July 1984

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled WEST AFRICAN FICTION AND GENERIC CRITICISM: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NOVEL OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT submitted by ABIOSEH MICHAEL PORTER in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Supervisor

External Examiner

Date 20 July 1984

Mul, for being the loyal and sincere partner

and friend that you are, this one is for you.

Love, 'Oseh.

ABSTRACT

The last three decades have seen such qualitative and quantitative development of African literature in European languages that literary historians and critics generally agree that the study of this literature has emerged as part of a new and respectable branch of learning. Although criticism is without doubt one area of scholarly activity that has contributed to this development, the issue surrounding the types of critical norms that are to be used in evaluating the African novel remains a thorny one. Critical opinion is often divided between those critics who recommend an African (read: Afrocentric) and those who call for a Universal (read: Eurocentric) type of criticism. This study demonstrates that, contrary to what both of these schools of critical thought suggest, when the appropriate critical criteria are used in evaluating literary works, the geographical or racial origins of either the critic or the critical method used will have little or no bearing on the work. I have therefore looked at the presence of the Novel of Personal Development in West Africa, and used that as evidence to argue that the much-neglected generic type of criticism is one kind of criticism that should be applied more often in discussions of the African novel.

As my point of departure I chose to look at two issues: 1) the controversy surrounding the need for and especially the role of generic criticism in literature and 2) reasons why I think it is more appropriate to describe the novels examined in this study as Novels of Personal Development instead of as Bildungsromane. These matters required examination in some detail not only because of their relevance to literary history and criticism, but more importantly because of the manner in which they are linked to some of the major problems concerning the evaluation of the African novel.

Using illustrations from a few representative European and several West African works of fiction I have demonstrated that if we concentrate on the generic qualities (structure, themes, and motifs), rather than merely on the socio-historical background of certain works, we will see that it becomes easier to see the close literary connections existing among certain texts that would otherwise have seemed totally unrelated. In the process I

have also made evident the point that although critics of African literature are generally aware of the interpretive and other functions of criticism, they have, in most instances failed to take advantage of its possibilities. I have therefore tried to highlight instances in which a generic approach to certain African texts might not only be useful to scholars engaged in the processes of literary re-construction, interpretation and evaluation, but might also help in clarifying literary relationships among several works (African and non-African). The present study thus reinforces the idea that African literature is indeed tractable to methodologies that can genuinely place it in the forum of Weltliteratur.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As with protagonists of the Novel of Personal Development, I have received help from certain people who provided the right kinds of support during my apprenticeship years. In Sierra Leone, I think of my grandmother, Lydia Taylor, who first introduced me to the joy of reading; my late father, M.B.P., who (in spite of everything else), encouraged me to develop an enquiring mind; my mother, Lizzie, Aunt Ina, Uncles 'Oseh and 'Bayomi, My mother-in-law, M.A. and my very good friends, Ola and Sylvia, Clarence and Tina--all of whom have been very supportive over the years. I wish to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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I. Introduction

Several recent studies have shown how, on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative growth during the last thirty years, African literature has emerged as a new and respectable branch of learning.[1] As Professor Eldred Jones remarks in his editorial marking the tenth anniversary of African Literature Today the journal he founded in 1968, scholars have been quite cognizant of the contributory role of criticism in this process of African literary development:

> ...criticism has helped to create a receptive climate for the [African] literature at home, has helped to establish the study of it on a serious level, has introduced writers to the wider world, and has thus helped to establish their reputation. Given the impertinence of the very act of criticism, this activity has generally served the literature well.[2]

Indeed more and more scholars seem to be getting down to the actual business of criticism instead of wasting time on the differences between African and Western critics, a minimally productive preoccupation which consumed many of them for more than a decade.

As the title of this study may suggest, I am following the example of these scholars by doing a generic study of some African novels; however, instead of looking at the novel as genre within the whole continent of Africa (as some critics claim to have done), I concentrate on a sub-genre--the Novel of Personal Development--in West Africa. In order to understand the rationale for limiting this study to both this novelistic sub-category and geographical area one should take a brief look at reviews of some works devoted either totally or in part to the African novel; these reviews and the books they assay, highlight some of the basic problems which seem to plague the criticism of African fiction.

In a review of Charles R. Larson's Novel in the Third World, Gerald Moore uses Larson's avowed basis for his choice of novels to question a popular misconception. Elaborating upon an argument he had already put forward in his Emergence of African Fiction,[3] Larson claims that, as a result of a common cultural background among Third World writers, and also because of the way this shared cultural background has helped to

shape the form of the novel in the Third World, one can say that a new form of the novel has emerged in that part of the world. He suggests further that it is perfectly legitimate to do a comparative study among novels as varied as the following: René Maran's Batouala, Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence, Bessie Head's Question of Power, and Cane by Jean Toomer (an Afro-American), The Crocodile by Vincent Eri (of Papua, New Guinea), Seven Arrows by Hyemeyohsts Storm (an American Indian), and Kanthapura by India's Raja Rao. Larson's assertions puzzle Moore and they prompt him to ask:

> What is the purpose of these selective surveys [such as Larson's] which purport to tell the reader something about fiction over vast areas of the world,in cultures quite as drastically different from each other as any of them are from the West?[4]

Now, although I do not endorse Moore's implied view that it is impossible to make a systematic comparative analysis of novels from diverse cultural backgrounds, I do agree with him when he suggests that, in much the same way as some "Commonwealth literature enthusiasts," Larson has only tried "to yoke the most improbable partners by violence together, simply on the basis that they inhabit a somewhat nebulously defined area of the world."[5] There is no doubt that, because of certain colonialist and or racial policies, those oppressed peoples of the world (generally referred to as "Third World" peoples) do share certain cultural heritages, but it will be erroneous for anyone to speak of a unified culture among them. For example, though there are definite cultural affinities among the various African peoples, there are also such distinct differences that it is impossible to speak of the African culture.

Another work which displays a problem similar to what Moore mentions is Molly Mahood's The Colonial Encounter, A Study of Six Novels--a work which, according to Eustace Palmer, tries to compare "in detail the responses of various writers, European and non-European, to the process of imperialism and its impact on the colonized societies."[6] In order to carry out her analysis, Dr. Mahood pairs a half dozen novels: Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Achebe's Arrow of God, Forster's Passage to India and Narayan's The Man-Eater of Mulgudi, Graham Greene's Comedians and V.S. Naipaul's Mimic Men. It is in

Dr. Mahood's selection of primary texts that Palmer finds a basic weakness in her book:

> ... it is significant that in her actual discussions of some of these works Professor Mahood gives lengthy and at times stimulating analyses of them as individual texts... But discussion, brilliant though it is, of works which do not seem to be relevant to the theme, impairs the coherence of The Colonial Encounter.[7]

It is clear from this and other statements Dr. Palmer makes about Mahood's book that he, like Gerald Moore, is implicitly suggesting that for novels from diverse (or even the same) culture to be considered under the same rubric, an inductive, generic method of analysis is certainly preferable to some other methods (such as those in which novels are selected mainly because of their geographical area of origin or largely because the works make excellent reading as individual texts).

It is ironic, however, that even though Palmer is aware of the advantages of looking for generic connections among literary texts, and of regarding novels as being more than just single, isolated units he makes the error of regarding Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence as a unique literary masterpiece. Although I do not think that most of the venom Charles Larson pours forth in his review of Palmer's Growth of the African Novel is warranted, I fully agree with Larson's suggestion that if Palmer had noticed the generic links between Schwarz-Bart's Le Dernier des justes , Armah's Fragments and Why are We So Blest, and Ouologuem's Les Milles et une bibles du sèxe and Le Devoir de violence, Palmer would have been more guarded in his admiration for Ouologuem's originality.[8]

It should be obvious by now that I am in support of generic criticism. It should be emphasized however that this type of criticism is neither the only nor indeed a privileged critical method. My position is that generic criticism is one well established method in European criticism that can and should be used more often in the criticism of African literature. We should also be aware that in trying to link texts with their generic kindred, a basic aim of criticism should be "to discover a principle operative in a number of texts, rather than what is specific about each of them."[9] Such an approach should prevent critics

from making some of the errors made by some scholars of African literature who tend to regard a few isolated examples as the basis for generalizations about the African novel.[10]

To give the reader an overview of my illustration and defence of generic criticism and its application to African literature, a summary of my study follows:

Chapter Two: "On Genre Theory and Criticism."

Chapter two will focus on the theory and usage of genres in literary history. It is an indisputable fact that since Plato and Aristotle right through the present day, scholars, critics and writers have been using generic classifications; but it is also a fact that in the post-romantic period, such classifications have increasingly come under fire. Benedetto Croce is perhaps the most obvious of those literary theoreticians who have vehemently argued against the use of literary types as a means of answering questions dealing with either literary history or evaluation.[11] It will therefore be necessary for me to do a synoptic survey of the evolution of genre theory and criticism. This will enable me to look at both the objections to and reasons for the continued existence of genres. I will also try to show how the absence of proper generic approaches has at times led to misinterpretations in the evaluation of African novels.

Chapter Three: "On the Need for More Comparative Approaches to the Study of African Fiction."

It is obvious that any study which discusses a sub-genre such as the Novel of Personal Development in West Africa will inevitably have to deal with the vexed question of the types of critical norms that are to be used in the evaluation of African fiction. That problem is addressed in this chapter, which demonstrates that when the appropriate critical criteria are used in evaluating a literary work, the geographical or racial origins of either the critic or critical method used will have little or no bearing on the interpretation of the work. I shall thus be contributing to the debate on the nature and function of

criticism in African fiction.

Chapter Four: "Types of the Novel of Personal Development in Europe: Analogues to the Emerging Sub-Genre in West Africa."

In this chapter, we shall look at some European antecedents of the West African Novel of Personal Development. I start by showing reasons--which include definition and illustration--why it is preferable to use the more flexible term "Novel of Personal Development," instead of the seemingly more appropriate and sophisticated Bildungsroman, in describing the novels I am examining. Taking my cue from such standard studies on the Bildungsroman and its generic kindred as Jerome H. Buckley's Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding,[12] Marianne Hirsch's "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great expectations and Lost Illusions,"[13] and Jeffrey Sammons' "The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?"[14] (to cite only a few examples), I not only show that because of certain generic and historical peculiarities of the Bildungsroman it is not really accurate to describe the works under study as Bildungsromane, but I also demonstrate that if we use less rigid (but equally valid) critical criteria and define these texts as Novels of Personal Development, we shall be able to see the thematic and formal links among some seemingly unrelated works in a clearer light. To achieve this aim, I summarize the generic connections among novels such as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Balzac's Le Père Goriot, Dickens' Great Expectations, and Maugham's Of Human Bondage.

Chapters Five through Eight.

The major points for consideration in these chapters are the formal and thematic links that bring some seemingly different West African novels together. Because all of these texts share an identical structural pattern, they are grouped for study on the basis of thematic affinities. Hence we examine such thematically-germane novels as Mongo Beti's

Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Mission terminée and Ferdinand Oyono's Une Vie de boy in chapter five, Kenjo Jumbam's The White Man of God, Amadou Koné's Les Frasques d'Ebinto, and Joseph W. Abruquah's The Torrent in chapter six, Aké Loba's Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir, Denis Oussou-Essui's La Souche calcinée, and Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen in chapter seven. Ben Okri's The Landscapes Within is treated all by itself in chapter eight because of its unique thematic content. I pay attention to thematic features such as the authors' emphasis on the different protagonists' growth from ignorance to knowledge, the antagonism between the heroes and some characters who are supposed to be helpful to them, and structural elements such as the writers' constant use of double irony and so forth.

Conclusion.

Discussion of the theoretical implications of this study is largely reserved for the conclusion. In this section, I look into such fundamental questions as the notions of "influence," "independent development," and the role of tradition.

This study does not aim to answer all the questions concerning the evaluation of the West African novel; however, if through an inductive, generic analysis it shows inter-connections among novels that have not previously been thought of as being connected, and if such inter-relatedness can provide some fresh insights in discussions of the Novel of Personal Development as genre and on the assessment of the West African novel, its aims would have been accomplished.

A. Notes

[1]Eldred Jones, "Editorial: Ten Years of African Literature Today," African Literature Today, 10 (1979), 1-5.

Albert Gérard, "The Study of African Literature: Birth and Early Growth of a New Branch of Learning," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée, Vol. V11, No. 1 (Winter 1980), 67-92.

Stephen H. Arnold, "African Literary Studies: Profile and Guide to a New Discipline," Into the 80's: Proc. of the 11th. Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of African Studies, 8-11 May, 1981. Vol.11 (Vancouver, B.C.: Tantaulus Research Ltd., 1981), pp. 128-51.

[2] Jones, 4.

[3] Charles R. Larson, The Emergence of African Fiction (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1971).

[4] Gerald Moore, "Charles R. Larson. The Novel in the Third World, rev. of The Novel in the Third World by Charles R. Larson, Research in African Literatures, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1978), 103.

[5] --------, 103.

[6] Eustace Palmer, "M.M. Mahood, The Colonial Encounter, A Reading of Six Novels," rev. of The Colonial Encounter, A Reading of Six Novels by M.M. Mahood, African Literature Today, 10 (1979), 248.

[7] --------, 250

[8] Charles R. Larson, "Eustace Palmer: The Growth of the African Novel," rev. of The Growth of the African Novel by Eustace Palmer, Research in African Literatures, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1981), 107-10.

[9] Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971), p. 5

[10] This is an issue that will be addressed in chapter two.

[11] Benedetto Croce, Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic, trans. Douglas Ainslie (New York: The Noonday Press, 1966), pp. 35-8.

[12] Jeome H. Buckley, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[13] Marianne Hirsch, "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions," Genre, 12, No. 3 (1979), 293-311.

[14] Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" Genre , 14, No. 2 (1981), 229-43.

II. On Genre Theory and Criticism.

It is almost axiomatic that whenever human beings react to literary phenomena there is bound to be some form of generic organization. This is true not only in post-secondary institutions where students of literature often have to read representative examples of "prose," "poetry," and "drama" and where various courses on the concept of genre are sometimes offered, but also in non-academic environments where people, with little or no literary background, often take part in the categorization of literary kinds. For example, the ordinary home television viewer who prefers to watch repeat movie versions of Moll Flanders and Tom Jones to those of Tess and The Mayor of Casterbridge because the latter two are "too sorrowful" or "too tragic" may be classifying (even if unconsciously) cinematic adaptations of literary texts according to their various kinds. Indeed, these two examples and the fact that literary grouping is now so popular might lead some critics to suggest that it is needless for me to devote a chapter to both the notion of genre and its effectiveness as a means of solving interpretative problems. Such an objection would be valid if it were a fact that, true to its popularity, the division according to kinds were universally accepted or, in other words, if, as I shall demonstrate later, some critics have not raised quite powerful, even if not totally convincing, arguments against generic divisions.

Over the years, genre criticism--defined as "discourse which makes use of the fact that literary works can be classified into groups or genres on the basis of similarities found within them--"[1] and especially its relevance to literary history have been the subjects of scholarly controversy. This debate alone would have been enough reason for us to look at the vicissitudes of genre as a literary phenomenon, especially since the neoclassical era. The neoclassical period serves as a convenient starting point because the backlash against (and even the rejection of) generic criticism have their origins in the prescriptive legislations misinterpreted as criticism according to genres by critics of that age. But there is an even more compelling reason for doing this brief survey. To date, a theoretically

conscious generic study of written African literature is virtually non-existent. It seems appropriate therefore that in order to demonstrate the usefulness of genre criticism in the study of African fiction, at least a partial history of the method and its progress should precede its application to the works we will study. It must be pointed out as well that an outline of this nature has to be concise for, as the works of genre experts such as Paul Hernadi and Rosalie L.Colie have shown, a historical and critical exposé of even a single literary period is itself worth at least one dissertation or book.[2]

It is a literary commonplace to say that one major characteristic of the neoclassical age was the rigid division of works according to genres; it is ironic, however, that in spite of all the creative and critical concern for generic purity and despite the appearance of some long lasting (and even if for their time, unacceptable) genres such as the novel and the formal essay, very little theoretical work was done on genre during the neoclassical era.[3] There were some notable exceptions, of course. Dryden, for instance, refers to the unfixed nature of genres by asserting in his Essay of Dramatic Poesy that "'Tis not enough that Aristotle said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripedes; and if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind."[4] As the following examples will show, it was in the romantic period--a period noted above all for the way writers struggled to free themselves from the rigid dictates of neoclassical genres--that some of the most influential contributions to modern genre theory were made.

One man of letters who holds a pre-eminent position for the development of genre theory in the romantic period and beyond is Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). Although as comparatists we are bound to be fascinated by Herder's ideas in general (which include his seminal thoughts on folk literature, his awareness of the the merits of the comparative approach to literature, and so forth), it is his views on the development of literature that are of primary interest for this study. Deviating from the typical neoclassical tendency of misinterpreting genre theory as a series of prescriptive statements by which artists have to abide, Herder suggests "wollen wir je eine philosophische Poetik oder eine

Geschichte der Dichtkunst erhalten: so müssen wir über einzelne Gedichtarten vorarbeiten und jede derselben bis auf ihren Ursprung verfolgen."[5] (If we want to arrive at a philosophical poetics or a history of the art of poetry, then we must first examine individual types [read: genres] of writing and follow each of these back to their origins). The implication of such an approach, of course, is that the literary historian should not only look at the origin of genres but also at the subsequent development and changes of those literary types. It is significant that though evolutionary views such as Herder's were taken to crass extremes by some scholars, notably Brunetière and John Addington Symonds in the late nineteenth-century, these views are re-surfacing in contemporary genre theory without the fatalistic pseudo-scientific approach that characterized them in the previous century.[6]

Before Brunetière, some of Herder's disciples such as the Schlegel brothers had also continued work on genre theory. The Schlegels maintained the epic-lyric-dramatic division, agreed with Herder's evolutionary approach to literature and, in fact, added some new meanings to the concept of genre. For example, Friedrich Schlegel considered the novel as a genre distinct from the epic.[7] It is also Friedrich who is reputed to have equated the lyric with the subjective, the dramatic with the objective, and the epic with the subjective-objective. Friedrich's brother, August Wilhelm, on the other hand, stressed the link between the three generic categories (lyric, dramatic, epic) and the famous dialectical formula, thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis.

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling is another romantic theoretician whose contribution to genre theory (especially his addition of a temporal dimension) should be mentioned. For Schelling, art is not only dialectical in the sense that it starts with lyric subjectivity and then moves on to epic objectivity before finally ending in dramatic synthesis, it also shows that the lyric and the epic have a definite temporal dimension; the lyric, for Schelling, is associated with the present while the epic is linked with the past--concepts that have found following (albeit in a modified manner) in the works of

modern scholars such as Jakobson and Staiger.[8]

In the post-romantic period no literary historian's name was as notoriously connected with genre theory as Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906). Indeed, it has been said of Brunetière that:

> No other critic, at least in France, has stated so clearly what seem to be central, critical truths. He believed that criticism must focus on the works of literature themselves and must distinguish the study of literature from biography, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines. Moreover, he courageously defended the final aim of criticism as that of judging and even ranking, and he distinguished this act of judgement sharply from any purely personal preference, impression, or enjoyment.[9]

We also know, however, that in spite of (or maybe because of) Brunetière's unquestionable contributions to the development of literary theory, history, and criticism in general, he made himself the target of at times unrestrained attack and derision when, in his Evolution des genres dans l'histoire de la littérature (1899), he tried to make a direct analogy between the evolution of species as expounded in science and the evolution of literary genres. In his five part lecture series, Brunetière proposed to look at areas such as those dealing with the existence of genres, the categorization of genres, the permanence of genres, and factors responsible for the modification and transformation of literary kinds.

Scholars up to this day do not question the legitimacy and (especially for the nineteenth-century) the urgency of the problems Brunetière wanted to solve. Never before Brunetière had anyone made an attempt to probe systematically into and solve some of these fundamental questions of genre theory. It is his method however that provoked the ire of both his contemporaries and later generations of literary scholars. From the beginning of his lectures Brunetière stressed the biological analogy; defining what his task was going to be he suggested among other things that:

> Je tâcherai de vous dire alors qu'elle a été, dans la constitution de la doctrine ou de l'hypothèse [de l'évolution], la part propre de Darwin.... Enfin puisqu'il n'y a pas moins de trente ans aujourd 'hui que le livre de L'Origine des espèces a paru, ne faudra-t-il pas que nous examinions ce que la doctrine est devenue dans ce long intervalle de temps? L'extension qu'on lui a donné?[10]

And Brunetière surely did try to show some of the extensions he thought could be added to the theory of the evolution of species. For example, he wanted to know how, just as in the evolution of animals, "un genre naît, grandit, atteint sa perfection, décline, et enfin meurt." Using the "evolution" of French tragedy as his example, Brunetière tried to trace the movement of that genre from its origins to its decline or death. According to Brunetière, French tragedy had its origins in plays such as Jodelle's Cleopâtre and Didon and in plays by other dramatists such as Robert Garnier and Antoine de Mongrédien. The second stage of French tragedy, which was in the period 1640-45, saw that genre taking on its special characteristics especially after some initial blending with other genres such as the heroic comedy, etc. The genre attained maturity in the hands of Corneille and Racine, especially in the latter's Andromaque. Beginning with Phèdre and right through the writings of Quinault and Voltaire, French tragedy started going downhill and finally plunged to its death in the hands of Marmontel, Laharpe, Ducis and others.[11]

Now, even though the task Brunetière had set himself was worthy of legitimate scholarly enquiry, his positivistic, pseudo-scientific approach is what brought his whole effort under fire. As Wellek observes:

> The analogy between the evolution of a genre and the life cycle of an individual breaks down at every point: it is only a series of metaphors, dangerous in its implication because it suggests the fatality of decline and and because it enforces the view that all change is only slow continuous change like biological change-that there are no breaks or jumps, no sudden reversals into the past, only growth and decline.[12]

It was thus inevitable that, especially at a time when artists and critics were still trying to free themselves from such neoclassical shackles as rigid generic divisions, Brunetière's grouping of literary masterpieces, in a manner similar to the process of "natural selection" would produce hostile, even if ultimately beneficial reactions. The positive aspects of Brunetière's endeavours should not and cannot be ignored for, it was indeed only after the publication of his texts on literary evolution that critics and literary historians began probing more seriously into the history, existence, and functions of literary kinds.

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) is one scholar who will always be remembered for his vehement rejection not only of Brunetière's evolutionary theory of literary genres but, in fact, the whole idea of classifying literary texts according to types. Reacting in a manner that perhaps even goes beyond the romantics' repudiation of neoclassical prescriptions, Croce rejected any kind of generic division. In his Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic (1909) Croce makes a distinction between two kinds of knowledge. He suggests that "the human mind can pass from the aesthetic to the logical." In other words, the mind can move from the intuitive to the scientific or conceptual. Croce also submits that it is impossible for the human mind to maintain these forms of knowledge simultaneously. Using the example of a visit to an picture gallery, Croce proposes that if as visitors to (and admirers of aesthetics in) the art gallery we sometime during the visit, decide to categorize the poems or pictures in the gallery into "merely quantitative categories" [read:"types"], "the individual expressive fact from which we started [would have] been abandoned," especially since for Croce neither poetry nor pictures in the art gallery can be expressed in logical terms. By attempting to classify aesthetic objects we change from aesthetes into logicians, "from contemplators of expression [we change] into reasoners" and for Croce, "the logical or scientific form, as such, excludes the aesthetic form."[13]

There can be no doubt that with the genealogical source hunting and literary anthropology (à la Brunetière and Symonds) that was prevalent in Croce's day there was need for the rejection of such types of genre "theory." As Croce himself points out, given the situation where "instead of asking before a work of art if it be expressive and what it expresses, whether it speak or stammer or is altogether silent they [scholars] ask if it obey the laws of epic or tragedy, of historical painting or landscape,"[14] it was definitely necessary for someone to remind scholars that, above all, they should be concerned with a text and not simply with the laws governing its creation or the class to which it belongs. But, if Brunetière's approach was one extreme towards a scientific analysis of literary texts, Croce's rejection was another extreme in favour of the unique nature of every

artistic piece and the "freedom" of the artist. What mattered for Croce was the aesthetic qualities that stamped out a work of art as being unique. The role of the literary tradition to which the work belongs was not considered as being of any value.

Paul Hernadi has remarked that "pace Croce every piece of literary criticism entails some consideration of genre."[15] This view is not to suggest, however, that because of either Croce's extreme position or the fact that generic classifications continue to exist, theoreticians have stopped debating the usefulness of (or even the necessity for) genre theory and criticism. In 1917, Professor R.K. Hack of Harvard added his views to those of Croce's by denouncing those literary historians who still clung to Brunetière's method. Again, one cannot argue with Hack's basic contention:

> Any critical method which tends to make us regard literature as a matter of externalized form is highly dangerous. The analogy between a species of animal and a species of literature is false. One epic cannot be said to beget another epic.[16]

What has been debated and is still debatable however is, first, Hack's suggestion that genre theory should be abandoned because such a theory cannot hold up to rigorous scientific examination, especially since, unlike in the scientific disciplines, where a "genuine scientific method leads, wherever it is applicable, to general agreement among scientists upon a body of ascertained facts," there is no such agreement in literary studies about the theory of genres.[17] Second, Maurice Blanchot's relatively recent denial of generic classification is also, at least, debatable:

> Seul importe le livre, tel qu'il est, loin des genres, en dehors des rubriques, prose, poésie, roman. témoignage, sous lesquelles il refuse de se ranger et auxquelles il dénie le pouvoir de lui fixer sa place et determiner sa forme. Un livre n'appartient plus à un genre, tout livre relève de la seule littérature comme si celle-ci détenait par avance, dans leur généralité, les secrets et les formules qui permettent seuls se donner à ce qui s'écrit réalité de livre.[18]

Some other critics also object to genre theory because, according to them, genres are immutable forms and therefore often fail to correspond to actual works. They also suggest that genre studies induce an unnecessary hierarchy among literary works (for example, epic and tragedy used to be very highly respected often at the expense of comedy

and satire which were often looked down upon). [19]

It can be seen though that notwithstanding the understandable and perhaps inevitable refusal of most post-romantic writers and some critics (such as Blanchot) to have literary works classified according to types, a good proportion of twentieth-century literary theoreticians have either advocated the use of, or dealt with, generic divisions. As Hernadi demonstrates in two excellent surveys of modern genre theory, not only have writers and scholars such as James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Emil Staiger, Kate Hamburger, Albert Guerard, Northrop Frye, and others added some new meanings and modifications to the traditional lyric-epic-dramatic triad, they and some other scholars have been giving more precise definitions to the nature and functions of literary genres.[20] Instead of regarding the different genres as unchangeable prescriptive statements handed down to us by the "ancients," modern scholars are more concerned with the objects and methods of, as well as the reasons for generic classification.[21]

Following the example of Karl Viëtor, most literary historians now make a distinction between what Viëtor refers to as Grundhaltungen ("Universals" or "Ultimates" such as Epic, Lyrik, Dramatik), and Gattungen (genres such as the ode, novel, comic play, sonnet, and so on); it is this latter group that is now generally used in generic analysis. As far as the methodology of contemporary genre criticism is concerned, Tzvetan Todorov sums up what can be regarded as the dominant pattern of this kind of criticism:

> When we examine works of literature from the perspective of genre, we engage in a very particular enterprise: we discover a principle operative in a number of texts, rather than what is specific about each of them. To study Balzac's The Magic Skin in the context of the fantastic as a genre is quite different from studying this work in and of itself, or in the canon of Balzac's works, or in that of contemporary literature.[22]

Since the "principle operative" in some of the novels I shall be treating may not be self-evident (especially in terms of thematics), I should reiterate that a primary consideration in this study will be an examination of both the formal and thematic affinities that exist among the various selected West African novels. In other words my approach to genre criticism is slightly different from that of scholars such as Wellek and Warren who insist

that generic criticism "should lean [only] to the formalistic side, that is, incline to generize Hudibrastic Octosyllabics or the sonnet rather than the political novel or the novel about factory workers." Although I agree with these scholars' views that in generic criticism, we should be dealing with "literary kinds, not such subject-matter classifications as might equally be made for non-fiction,"[23] I also believe that in the process of examining those mainly formalistic elements that help to characterize a work of art as "literary" we often can see not only how the work was constructed, or the relationship between its constituent parts, but also what we interpret as the work's meaning. Thus, following the example of scholars like Claudio Guillen, I think that generic studies of literary texts should involve an investigation of both the structural and thematic links among them.[24] For African literature this is especially important, for until generic clues are part of what critics search for, the meanings they derive will remain shallow and impervious to the thematic implications of form.

In terms of modern genre theory, it is no surprise that at a time when writers (and some critics) reject classification of any sort, most genre theorists have moved away from dogmatic, prescriptions of genre to more concrete, descriptive, and philosophical ones. These theorists can be divided, by and large, into two groups. The first group, which regards genres as "institutional imperatives which both coerce and are in turn coerced by the writer,"[25] includes scholars such as Harold Elmer Mantz, Austin Warren, and Alastair Fowler. Some views expressed by Fowler may be seen as characteristic of this group:

> ... [even] modern fiction, itself not exactly uninstructed by critical concept is necessarily communicated by modulation of at least potentially recognizable genres.... Thus Calder Willingham's Eternal Fire burlesques southern gothic. Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus combines Bildungsroman with novel of ideas: and Pat Highsmith's They Who Walk Away departs from the crime in the direction of the psychological novel.[26]

The other major group of genre theoreticians are those scholars who regard genre criticism as a tool that can be used effectively for better comprehension and interpretation of texts. Such theoreticians including Charles Whitmore, J. Tynianov, E.D. Hirsch, Claudio Guillen, Allan Rodway, and Eliseo Vivas endorse at least one of the major

reasons given in support of generic criticism by Northrop Frye:

> The purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them.[27]

Although we are arguing that generic criticism should be employed more by critics of African literature, it should be pointed out that the use of some kind of generic criticism as an interpretive device is in a certain way quite popular in the history and especially the criticism of African literature. In addition to innumerable articles and books dealing with the diverse genres of oral narratives, there have appeared, especially over the last fifteen years, several books, monographs, and theses dealing with genres within the written tradition. In this latter category one can cite as examples of generic studies in African literature such standard texts as G.D: Killam's The Novels of Chinua Achebe (1969), Charles R. Larson's The Emergence of African Fiction (1971), Eustace Palmer's Introduction to the African Novel (1972), The Growth of the African Novel (1979), Anthony Graham-White's The Drama of Black Africa (1974), George Heron's Poetry of Okot p'Bitek (1976), Romanus Egudu's Four Modern West African Poets (1977), and Michael Etherton's The Development of African Drama (1982).

There is no doubt that the generic approach has been beneficial to African literature but it will also be no exaggeration to suggest that, because most of the generic studies that have been done on the written literatures of Africa have been restricted only to the prose-poetry-drama division, some avoidable errors of interpretation have continued to plague the criticism of works in that tradition. Let us look at a few of the most glaring of such errors.

The first deals with the obvious manner in which certain texts have been misinterpreted because their full generic potential has not been explored by critics. Because scholars continue to look at works only as fiction, drama, and poetry they seem to forget the contributory role the gamut of genres and sub-genres can play in the interpretation of literary texts. My argument therefore is that if critics of African literature

looked at works as belonging to different genres and sub-genres, especially in terms of their regional variants and not just in terms of doubtful, specious universals, these critics might be able to yield richer meanings not only from specific texts under consideration but also from other works in the tradition concerned.[28] Indeed Albert Gérard's observation about future historical surveys of African literature holds equally true for any future attempt at "genre-alyzing" in that literature. For Gérard, African literature has blossomed to such an extent that no single scholar henceforth can write a satisfactory survey:

> ...the amount of writing is now so vast that it can be satisfactorily managed only by a team of scholars and not by any single man, however competent and industrious.[29]

Unfortunately, this commonsensical approach suggested by Gérard is still lacking in the generic criticism of African literature and, as I shall demonstrate, this has often led to some conspicuous misinterpretations.

Even a quick glance at the plethora of novels that have been written in European languages by Africans can explain why the critical methodologies of certain critics have been inevitably subject to attack. It is seen, for example, that though Heinemann Educational Books (which is just one of the many publishing houses dealing with African literature) has published more than one hundred and twenty novels, critics still have the tendency to treat only a few masterpieces as the "African novel" or to regard all African novels as having uniform characteristics. I will elaborate upon this assertion in a later and more relevant chapter.

Suffice it to say now that instead of a critic like Derek Elders faulting Achebe for not writing the two historical novels--Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God --in the manner in which Soyinka wrote The Interpreters (which, incidentally, is a political novel), Elders would have done better service to Achebe's texts and to African literature in general if, for example, he had read those two novels as part of the historical novel tradition.[30] Can it not be said of Achebe (as was said of Sir Walter Scott) that "the cream of [Achebe's] work lies in the fiction inspired by the life and history of his own country?"[31] In that case the two

Achebe novels may be better interpreted if they are studied with some other historical novels such as Paul Hazoumé's Doguicimi (1938) , Ibrahim Issa'a Grande eaux noires (1959), Niane's Soundjata ou l'épopée mandingue (1960), Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence (1968), Armah's Two Thousand Seasons (1973), and Mbise's Blood on Our Land--all novels dealing with different phases of African history and some with definite similarities in technique. As a corollary I will suggest that the intrinsic value of The Interpreters can be seen in a clearer light if it is viewed as belonging to the sub-genre of political novels that surfaced in the sixties and seventies, the period just after "independence" for most African countries. Hence, a generic study of The Interpreters will be incomplete without reference to Achebe's A Man of the People (1966), Serumaga's Return to the Shadows (1968), Armah's The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born (1968), Kourouma's Les Soleils des Indépendances (1968), Aluko's Chief The Honourable Minister (1970), and Ngugi's Petals of Blood (1977).

Critical evaluation (or is it devaluation) of Cyprian Ekwensi's oeuvre may be seen as another reason for the need to study at least some novels as sub-genres of the traditional novel. Most of the critical commentary on Ekwensi's works has been negative and there are some legitimate reasons for this. The most consistently damaging flaw that has been singled out in Ekwensi's art is his style. A much-quoted article published by Bernth Lindfors in 1969 still summarizes the dominant critical thrust on Ekwensi. For Lindfors (as for many other critics), though Ekwensi is certainly one of the most prolific writers from Africa:

> Not one [of his works] could be called the handiwork of a careful, skilled craftsman. Ekwensi may be simply too impatient an artist to take pains with his work or to learn by a calm, rational process of trial and error.... As a consequence, many of his stories and novels can serve as excellent examples of how not to write fiction.[32]

Now, it goes without saying that if Ekwensi's novels were measured against some types of novels even some of his best works might be regarded as artistically inferior pieces. If, however, some Ekwensi novels were considered (together with some other novels by

Africans and other writers) as also belonging to some specific sub-categories of the novel, then critical esteem of that author might be higher than it has generally been. I shall use Ekwensi's People of the City and Jagua Nana--two of his most celebrated works--to prove this point.

Any reader familiar with the qualities of the picaresque novel will agree with Emmanuel Obiechina's placing of both People of the City and Jagua Nana in that novelistic sub-category.[33] We see for instance that structurally both novels are made up of loose episodic plots held together mainly by the protagonist in each novel. Events in both texts are often filtered from the points of view of the leading characters whom the novelist invariably uses to preach a heavy, moralizing message. It is again true that both of these novels have digressions and asides which, for some of the time at least, seem irrelevant to their structure or even plot. Ekwensi's manner of characterization has also made him the subject of critical attacks, notably by critics such as Lindfors, Palmer, and others who blame him for his lack of moral detachment.[34] Implicit in the argument of these critics is an attack on Ekwensi's seeming endorsement of immoral and amoral behaviour. By failing to create a moral distance between himself and immoral characters such as Amusa and Jagua, Ekwensi, these critics suggest, seems to have written pseudo-autobiographies in People of the City and Jagua Nana. Finally, it has been acknowledged, even by his severest critics, that though Ekwensi may not have the capacity to give psychological insights into his characters as, for example, Achebe, Soyinka, and Ngugi have, he will long be remembered for his enduring concern with the social problems of Nigerian urban areas. When we consider these qualities of these two Ekwensi novels and the fact that their protagonists actually fit the definition of the picaro,[35] we can see that most of the elements that have often been considered as being negative in People of the City and Jagua Nana are actually characteristics of the picaresque novel.

If Obiechina (who is one of the few critics to have seen some positive aspects in Ekwensi's writings) had pursued his interpretation of People of the City as a picaresque

novel and if some critics had explored the generic links between Ekwensi novels such as these under discussion and other African picaresque novels such as Oyono's Chemin d'Europe (1960), Nwankwo's Danda (1964), and Maddy's No Past, No Present, No Future (1973), such critics might have been able not only to assess the creative abilities of these authors in a more appropriate manner but perhaps give better interpretations to the individual texts. It is for this reason that I do not think that Ekwensi's Yaba Roundabout Murder (1962) should be dismissed (as it is done by Lindfors) merely as a chapbook which shows that "Ekwensi was familiar with the whodunit genre, knew its stock situations and clichés, and had not lost its flair for imitating bad models as well."[36] This is not the place for us to go into either the merits or demerits of detective fiction and its role in society. It is significant to note, however, that at least one recent study has shown the presence of thematic and structural qualities of detective fiction in the writings of some of Africa's best artists. It is also important that in that study, Linus Asong mentions the contributions which the writers he studied (Beti, Ngugi, Ousmane, and Doris Lessing) have made to the overall respectability or even acceptability of the genre:

> African writers, particularly those included here, seem to have achieved something that is immensely vital in the face of the general academic opinion of the [detective] genre as a tired and dying sub-art form.[37]

Although a generic study such as Asong's is a positive sign for the future of our area of study, it has one obvious shortcoming. It is restricted to only some of the "greats" among African novelists. It is of course understandable that in a study dealing with, among other things, the rehabilitation of a much-maligned (albeit popular) genre that Asong would have chosen to use some of the technically superior texts to prove that detective fiction is not simply made up of pulp pot-boilers. But, as practitioners concerned with the development of every facet of our discipline, I think our attention should be focused (whenever possible) on the different members of the writing family, including even the less aesthetically-competent ones. As a consequence, I think Asong might make an even more significant contribution by writing an expansion of his study, adding novels such as Yaba

Roundabout Murder and some others previously studied by Alain Ricard--Cofie Quaye's Sammy Slams the Gang (1970) and Murder in Kumasi.[38] Such a project might not only help trace the birth and growth of the detective novel as a sub-genre in Africa but might point to some areas of development of the African novel in general. It should also be obvious that this view can also be applied to novels which portray characteristics of other sub-genres: for example, the existential novel--a category that will include texts as varied as François-Borgia Marie Evembé's Sur la terre en passant (1966), Malick Fall's La Plaie (1967), Peter Palangyo's Dying in the Sun (1968), and Armah's Fragments (1970).

Having shown that, in spite of some objections, genre theory and criticism still continue to flourish, and having shown some preference for that type of criticism, I should stress a basic belief in the limitations of generic criticism. Such views have been cogently expressed by John Reichert as follows:

> First, of course, it is misleading to speak at all of the genre to which a work belongs. The planning of a work in one genre can never rule out the interpretive questions raised by some other genre to which it may also belong. Second, if one were to define a group of genres in such a way that they were indeed mutually exclusive, they would in all likelihood be trivial (e.g. all novels over a given length), or nearly empty classes (e.g. all works whose sole aim was ridicule) or so general as to dictate no particular critical approach.[39]

Notwithstanding such limitations, I think that the generic approach is indeed necessary for the continued growth of criticism in African literature. As I shall demonstrate in later chapters, the absence of this type of criticism has not only prevented any systematic detection and discussion of one of the most vibrant sub-genres of the (African) novel, the Novel of Personal Development, but has occasionally been responsible for some obvious critical misperceptions of the African novel.

A. Notes

[1]John Reichert, "More than Kin and less than Kind: The Limits of Genre Theory," Yearbook of Comparative Criticism Vol. V11: Theories of Literary Genre, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p.57.

[2] Paul Hernadi, Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972).
See also, Rosalie L. Colie, The Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

[3] René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955), 1, 20-21.

[4] John Dryden, "Heads of an answer to Rymer," in Of Dramatic Poesie and other Essays, ed. George Watson (London and New York: Dent and Dutton, 1962), 1, 213.

[5] Wellek, A History...11, 19

[6] See for example Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origins of Genres," New Literary History, 8 No. 1 (1976), 159-70.

[7] Wellek, A History...11, 19.

[8] Genette, 405-09.

[9] René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) 1V, p. 61.

[10] Ferdinand Brunetière, L'Evolution des genres dans l'histoire de la littérature (Paris: Librairie Hachette et cie, 1910), p. 19.

[11] Brunetière, pp. 23-24.

[12] Wellek, A History...1V, p. 67.

[13] Croce, Aesthetic, pp. 35-36.

[14] --------, p. 37.

[15] Paul Hernadi, "Order Without Borders: Recent Genre Theory in the English-Speaking Countries," in Yearbook of Comparative Criticism: Theories of Literary Genre, ed. Joseph P. Strelka (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p. 192.

[16] R.K. Hack. "The Doctrine of Literary Forms," Harvard Studies in Classical philology, Vol. XXV11 (1916), 4.

[17] --------, 15.

[18] Maurice Blanchot, Le Livre à venir (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), pp. 243-44.

[19] Fowler, Kinds of Literature, p. 35.

[20] Paul Hernadi, for example, has done thorough-going surveys on modern genre theory in Beyond Genre and in the article on "Recent Genre Theory" already referred to in notes 2 and 15 respectively.

[21] For descriptive and philosophical notions of genre theory and criticism one can refer to books such as those by Hernadi, Beyond Genre; Todorov, The Fantastic; Strelka, (ed). Theories of Literary Genre and Fowler, Kinds of Literature--among others-- and to numerous articles published in journals such as Zagadnienia Rodzajow Literackich, Genre, and a special issue of Poetics i.e. Vol.10 (1981).

[22] Todorov, The Fantastic, p. 3. Fowler offers similar views in his Kinds of Literature ; according to him "when we assign a work to a generic type, we do not suppose that all its characteristic traits need be shared by every other embodiment of the type. In particular, new works in the genre may contribute additional characteristics. In this way a literary genre changes with time, so that its boundaries cannot be defined by any single set of characteristics such as would determine a class" p.38. It will be necessary to bear such descriptions in mind when discussing the Novel of Personal Development as genre.

[23] Wellek and Warren, Theory, p. 233.

[24] For more on this issue see Claudio Guillen's chapter "On the Uses of Literary genre" in his Literature as System (Princeton,N.J: Princeton University Press, 1971).

[25] Norman Holmes Pearson, "Literary Forms and Types or a Defense of Polonius," English Institute Annual (1940), 70.

[26] Alastair Fowler, "The Life and Death of Literary Forms," New Literary History, Vol.11, No.2 (1970), 203.

[27] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism:Four Essays, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 249. See also, Charles E. Whitmore, "The Validity of Literary Definitions," PMLA , 39 (1924), 722-36.
E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967).
Eliseo Vivas, "Literary Classes: Some Problems," Genre , 1, No.2 (1968), 97-105.
Allan Rodway, "Generic criticism: An Approach Through Type, Mode and Kind." in Contemporary Criticism, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), pp. 83-105.

[28] The importance of looking at literary works from a generic perspective in order to yield some richer meanings which might have otherwise eluded the critic has been articulated persuasively by J. Tynianov (among others). See his "De l'évolution littéraire" in Theórie de la littérature trans. and ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), pp. 120-37.

[29] Albert Gérard, "The Study of African Literature: Birth and Early Growth of a New Branch of Learning," Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée, Vol.V11, No.1 (Winter 1980), 74. I owe the term "genre-alyzing" to Paul Hernadi who used it in his article on "Recent Genre Theory."

[30] Derek Elders, "G.D. Killam: The Novels of Chinua Achebe", rev. of The Novels of Chinua Achebe by G.D. Killam, African Literature Today, 5 (1971), 143-47.

[31] Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1954), p.124.

[32] Bernth Lindfors, "Cyprian Ekwensi: An African popular Novelist," African Literature Today, 3 (1969), 2.

[33] Emmanuel Obiechina, "Ekwensi as Novelist," Présence Africaine, 86 (1973), 152-64. Obiechina rightly mentions on p. 153 that "the nature of Ekwensi's material [in People of the City] and the type of task he sets himself dictate that his best narrative method should be the picaresque technique," which I think Ekwensi uses. Obiechina does not continue, however, to evaluate that work as a picaresque novel.

[34] Eustace Palmer's views on this issue can be seen as typical. See his Growth of the African Novel (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979), pp. 46-53.

[35] "Picaresque Novel, The:" A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed (1976), p. 391. For more detailed characteristics of the picaresque novel as genre see the following:
Stuart Miller, The Picaresque Novel (Cleveland: The Press of Case western Reserve University Press, 1967).
Claudio Guillen, "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque," in Literature as System, pp. 71-106.
Frederick Monteser, The Picaresque Element in Western Literature ([No Location] University of Alabama Press, 1975).
Richard Bjornson, The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).
In very simple terms, a picaro is usually "a rascal of low degree engaged in menial tasks and making his living more through his wits than his industry." He also "through the nature of his various pranks and predicaments and by virtue of his association with people of varying degree, affords the author an opportunity for satire on the various classes." Handbook p. 391.

[36] Lindfors, 10.

[37] Asong Linus Tongwo, "Detective Fiction and the African Scene: From Whodunit to Whydunit." Thesis. University of Alberta, 1981, p. 68.

[38] The Cofie quaye texts were cited by Alain Ricard in "Remarques sur la naissance du roman policier en Afrique de l'ouest," in Neo-African literature and Culture: Essays in Memory of Janheinz Jahn, eds. Bernth lindfors and Ulla schild (Mainz: B. Heymann, 1970), pp. 106-110.

[39] Reichert, p. 65.

III. On the Need for More Comparative Approaches to the Study of African Fiction.

Before we examine the presence and nature of the Novel of Personal Development in West Africa, we must look at two inter-related but often controversial issues concerning the evaluation of the African novel. These problems deal with the types of norms that should be used to assess the African novel and the relationship(s) that should exist between that novel and its other global (especially European) counterparts.

According to some critics, the African novel is so radically different from the European novel that a distinctively African set of critical norms should be set for assessing it. Other critics object to this call for African criteria and argue that the African novel is not so different from novels of other cultures as to warrant a separate and unique set of critical standards for its evaluation. My aims in this chapter are two-fold: first, to show some basic weaknesses both in the "African criticism for African literature" and in the "universal" approaches and, second, to suggest ways in which we can develop some new approaches towards the evaluation of African fiction.

In a review of Eustace Palmer's Introduction to the African Novel Adeola James lambastes Palmer for making "innumerable references...to European literature" and she continues her attack on Palmer by suggesting that:

> It is equally unpolitical [for Palmer] to say very glibly that [Ngugi's] A Grain of Wheat recalls Conrad's Lord Jim "on which it seems to have been consciously modelled." Must the African always copy from his white masters? Can he not be credited with a certain amount of originality? Anyway such a derivative approach to literary criticism is as tiresome as it is fruitless. What does it mean to the average African student to whom this work is supposed to benefit to say that A Grain of Wheat is modelled on Lord Jim when he is not likely to have read the novel in question.[1]

It is clear from these and from some of her subsequent remarks that critics such as Mrs. James view any attempt to link the African novel with its European kindred as an indication of a neo-colonial literary relationship. It is needless to emphasize that such critics might regard a study of the Novel of Personal Development--a novel form which in all likelihood had its origins in Europe--in West Africa as being objectionable. The same can be said for Charles Larson who, even though for completely different reasons, might also

find such a project unacceptable. As can be seen from Larson's discussion of African fiction in his Emergence of African Fiction, he might argue that by suggesting the presence of this type of novel in Africa I am only introducing false critical standards for assessing African fiction. For Larson, the structure of the African novel is so completely "different" from that of its European counterpart that, he concludes, African novelists have developed a completely new genre. He therefore suggests that an equally new critical apparatus should be used for this new genre.[2]

Before showing the shortcomings of both James' and Larson's critical positions I should point out that not all of what they say is without basis. For example, even when we realize the parochial and ultimately racist (and hence unacceptable) nature of Mrs. James' type of criticism, we still can agree that her basic fear of literary neo-colonialism is not completely unfounded. As some "interpretations" of African literature have amply demonstrated, there is a legitimate danger when criticism based on the "superiority" of a "metropolitan" tradition or the quest for "universality" becomes the only acceptable way of judging a literary work.[3] Indeed, though one does not and should not support a narrow-minded, "nationalistic" reading of any literary text, one can understand why some critics become suspicious when reference is made to literary "god-parents." As one critic puts it when referring to an analogous situation in Canada, "the disinclination ... to examine Canadian literature from an international perspective is probably a healthy fear of colonialism."[4] Similarly, as even some of Larson's most strident critics have stressed, no one can argue against Larson's appeal to scholars to take into account some of the specifically African characteristics of the novel in their discussions of African fiction.[5]

These comments, do not, however diminish the essential racist and non-literary nature of the "African criticism for the African novel" approach. Professor James' over-protective and paranoiac method leads her, of course, to misinterpret some of Palmer's statements. But the crassness of this type of critical approach is seen in its worst form when Adeola James suggests that African students (and presumably their teachers)

should be encouraged to read only those books they have heard of and more importantly only African texts.

Larson, for his part, suggests that the African novel is "different" from the western novel because of the "limited importance of characterization," "the frequent occurence of didactic endings," "the preponderance of situational plots," the absence of psychological complexity in the African novel, and "the African writer's frequent difficulties in writing convincing dialogue."[6] But, as any knowledge of both African and European novels will show, most of the artistically-poor qualities Larson refers to as the representative characteristics of the African novel are indeed common to poor quality fiction of all cultures. One simply needs to read some novels by Balzac, Dickens, Hardy, Dreiser, among others, to see the validity of this point. Examples also abound in novels by Achebe, Kourouma, Soyinka, Ngugi, Ousmane, and so forth to show that the creation of psychologically complex characters or the creation of convincing dialogue are not restricted to European writers. Dan Izevbaye's conclusion that "what Larson presents [in his Emergence] as 'Africanisms' are really the old halftruths about Africa"[7] is totally justified.

If, as I have indicated, I do not support an Afro-centric approach towards the African novel does it mean that I am in support of a universal approach? The answer is positive but with one major condition appropriately provided by Achebe:

> [that] the word universal [be] banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such time as people cease to use it as a narrow, self-serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizons extend to include all the world.[8]

It might even be said that this condition is hardly necessary for current criticism of African literature because most critics are turning away from the Euro-centric approach. But even among those critics who, while taking cognizance of the context in which African novels are written consider that, above all, they are dealing with literary texts, there have been problems. Though several reasons may be proffered for such problems I shall concentrate only on the most important ones.

The tremendous amount of thematic studies on the African novel is undoubtedly one reason why there is so much critical confusion in the field. I should stress at the outset that I do not oppose the thematic approach to the novel per se; such studies, when properly done, are relevant and necessary; as E.D. Blodgett points out:

> Thematics itself... is a method of enquiry that we cannot dispense with... and its value as an instrument can always be improved by an examination of Russian formalists, notably in the work of Tomashevski.[9]

It is also true that, in a literary environment where pre-critical attitudes can still be passed off as thematic renderings of texts, one cannot underestimate the need for competent critics to scrutinize the thematic strands of texts in order that the "message" (which is after all an important level of meaning) of such texts might be properly interpreted. Unfortunately, however, quite a number of thematic studies devoted to the African novel turn out to be purely literal and even superficial explanations of the novels. It goes without saying then that, by adopting such an approach, critics often fail to bring out the unique quality of a given work and in fact they also hardly "take into account what constitutes the uniqueness of a body of literary works, of literature at a national [regional or continental] level."[10] This means that some "critiques" of African fiction are in actual fact glorified plot summaries. Then there is also the problem of an inordinate number of (at times) repetitive essays that have been published on themes such as "clash of cultures," "tradition versus modernity," "anti-colonialism" (at times to the detriment of other areas of literary interest).

There are, of course, critics who, in addition to dealing with themes, have been exploring other areas of literary concern in the African novel (areas such as structure, language, image studies and so forth) but, here again, problems do arise. One such problem centres on either the inability or unwillngness of some scholars to look at the African novel in its multi-lingual context. Even when the genre is restricted to those works written in European languages it is evident that for one to speak of the African novel as genre one must take into account three distinct even if complementary literary traditions--lusophone, anglophone, and francophone. The situation that prevails, especially between critics of

anglophone and francophone African literatures, is for critics to treat the African novel as if it were a product of a unilingual literary tradition. For example, specialists of francophone African literature who examine the novel generally concentrate only on the francophone novel. To the credit of most of these critics, however, it should be stated that usually they also indicate that their area of study is restricted to francophone Africa.

With most critics of the anglophone African novel though there is the mistaken (or is it arrogant) assumption that African fiction or even the whole literature is made up only of texts that either were written originally in or translated into English. This latter fault, which I shall deal with in more detail because it is more flagrant and widespread, has often led to misleading assumptions and conclusions about the "African novel." For instance, if a reader, unfamiliar with West African literature, were to read Adrian Roscoe's misleadingly-captioned chapter on "West African Prose," in his book that bears the equally deceptive title Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature, that reader would be left with the distinct, and false, impression that "West African Prose" is comprised of writing mainly (or only) by Nigerians.[11] But this lack of regard for other West African writers is not restricted to expatriate critics like Roscoe.

Emmanuel Obiechina's description of the qualities that make a truly regional "West African novel" is even more glaringly anglo-centric than Roscoe's. For example Obiechina suggests that, even by 1967 when he first did the study as his Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation, "the West African novel necessarily derives from western models and is up to the present written in English."[12]

One simply needs to think of pioneer francophone novelists such as Hazoumé, Sadji, Laye, Beti, Oyono, Ousmane, and Dadié to see the absurdity of such a statement. Furthermore, a close look at some of Obiechina's reasons for speaking of the "West African novel" not only emphatically illustrates the dangers of presenting a multilingual literary environment as being unilingual, but also of using a few (perhaps even isolated) examples as the basis for generalizations. According to Obiechina "the West African novel is

a novel written in West Africa about West African life." What about novels such as Sembène Ousmane's Le Docker noir (1956)--whose setting, with the exception of a brief introductory scene in Senegal, is in France--or Dilibe Onyeama's Nigger at Eton (1972) nearly all of which is set in England? One wonders as well whether all West African novelists (including Olympe Bhêly-Quénum, and other such novelists) use their writings "to explore the problems of society and to indicate, through the aspects of contemporary life [they are] criticizing, the social reforms which [they] wish to see." I also question Obiechina's claim that after the publication of heavily psychological novels such as Evembé's Sur la terre en passant (1966) and Malick Fall's La Plaie (1967) "the West African novel tends to show individual characters not through their private psychological experiences, but through community or social life, and activities of a collective or general nature."[13]

If one suspects that it is Obiechina's inability to read francophone West African novels that lets him generalize about the West African novel in the way he does, it becomes even more obvious in the case of another prominent anglophone critic of the african novel. In Eustace Palmer's discussion of Mongo Beti's novels in The Growth of the African Novel he wrongly implies that Beti stopped writing novels after the publication of Le Roi miraculé which, by the time Palmer's work was published, was the last Beti novel to have been translated into English.[14]

Corresponding to this manner of looking at the African novel as a genre written in only one language is the fallacious but widely-held belief that there is only one unified critical approach to the African novel. Such a belief is naturally paramount in the views of those scholars who try to make a distinction between a "western" (or "European") and an "African" type of criticism; but even among those critics who do not compartmentalize the business of criticism according to the critic's geographical area of origin there is the (perhaps unwitting) tendency to assume that a single, unified standard or set of criteria should be applied to all works of African fiction. If Eustace Palmer is singled out again in

this regard, it is not only because he has often demonstrated an unquestionable ability to explicate certain aspects of individual African novels but also because he is one of the few scholars who have attempted to look at the African novel on more than the national or regional level.

Any acquaintance with Professor Palmer's works, however, will show that his insistence that Arnold Kettle's "life" and "pattern" be the only criteria that are to be used in evaluating the novel has made for obvious lacunae in both An Introduction to and The Growth of the African Novel. Because of Palmer's over-emphasis on "life" and "pattern" he ignores discussing either certain regional novels or certain sub-genres--subjects that would have made his "introduction" and his discussion on "growth" more comprehensive. In spite of the fact that novelists from South africa, largely as a result of that country's abhorrent racial policies, have added at least a new thematic dimension to the African novel, Palmer does not include a single South African novel in his studies. Similarly, as a result of the two criteria, Palmer excludes discussion of any of the "war novels" that have been written by Africans during the last decade. With the exception of a brief reference to Ekwensi's Survive the Peace which Palmer himself describes as a novel that does not really treat "the horrors of the actual [civil] war" but as one that deals with "the disintegration of family that it causes,"[15] Palmer does not consider any of the novels that were the inevitable fictional products of either the civil war in Nigeria or the war of liberation in Zimbabwe.

Surely no African novel had treated the subject of war in so much detail before the publication of novels such as Kole Omotoso's The Combat (1972), Eddie Iroh's trilogy, Forty Eight guns for the General (1976), Toads of War (1979), and The Sirens in the Night (1981), Chukwuemeka Ike's Sunset at Dawn (1971) and S. Nyamfukudza's The Non-Believer's Journey (1980), and it is thus incomprehensible that a work which is supposed to be showing the growth of the African novel should have failed to mention even an example of this new sub-category of African fiction.

If the tenor of the discussion so far has been to stress some of the problems that frequently surface in discussions of the African novel on either a regional or continental basis, it is not only because it deals implicitly with the question of whether it is really valid to look for the Novel of Personal Development as genre in West Africa but also because it underlines the need for even better criteria for the evaluation of African fiction. One definite way we can work towards an improved poetics of the African novel is to adopt (as scholars such as E.C. Nwezeh [16] and Albert Gérard[17] have suggested for African literature in general) a comparative method of analysing that novel. Although as a comparatist, I can easily justify such a position by referring to, and showing the relevance of, Goethe's appeal for all literatures to be considered as part of Weltliteratur, I think some specific aspects of the African novel make it even more reasonable for us to use the comparative approach.

In the first place, most critics now agree that, unlike the other literary genres in Africa, the novel form was largely borrowed from Europe and then put through various stages of dosmetication (such as indigenization of the European languages, addition or development of new themes, setting, and so on).[18] It is also a fact that largely as a result of some identical historical, political, and cultural experiences in various African and other societies, the African novel often exhibits some more identifiable traits with works written by novelists from some other geographical or political entities such as the Caribbean, Commonwealth, or "Third World" countries. These circumstances and the fact that African novelists use, among others, three European languages to represent a predominantly non-European cultural reality should make the African novel a veritable gold mine for comparative studies.

As can be seen from studies such as S.K. Dabo's 1967 Oxford B.Litt thesis[19] and Edris Makward's Ph.D dissertation,[20] through works such as Otto Bischofsberger's Tradition und Wandel aus der Romanschriftsteller Kameruns und Nigerias[21] and on to more recent essays like Bu-Buakei Jabbi's "Conrad's Influence on Betrayal in A Grain of Wheat"[22]

and Richard Bjornson,s comparative discussion of Kane's L'Aventure ambiguë and Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude,[23] a few scholars have already been using comparative methods in their analysis of the African novel. Assuredly, such studies are gratifying but it should also be pointed out that quite a substantial number of these studies are still blurred by methodological problems.

The question of literary influence, which even at the best of times easily stirs controversy is, not surprisingly, one of the main problematic areas for critics using the arsenal of comparative methods. Although most critics citing instances of literary influence have been quick to opine that "writers like Achebe, Laye and Ekwensi were much more influenced by Conrad, Hardy, Dickens, Kafka and George Eliot than by the African oral tale," or that "à côté de ces simples souvenirs de lectures [des oeuvres européenes], on trouve chez d'autres écrivains des imitations plus conscientes,"[24] very few studies have been done to show the true nature of such influences. Thus, in spite of the numerous references that have been made to Hardy's and Yeats' influence on Achebe, there have been very few precise attempts to show the exact manner in which these two British authors (who at least in their creative works portray conflicting philosophies and perceptions of history) did influence Achebe.[25] Moreover, even some of those scholars who actually try to depict ways in which an African writer might have been influenced easily resort to the hierarchical debit and credit kind of "influence" study which stresses, above all, that the work of the "receiver" is always subordinate to that of the "emitter." Thus, for example, after listing Ngugi's thematic and formal debts to Conrad (and without attempting in any way to show Ngugi's own originality), C.P. Sarvan not only implies that Ngugi, unlike his mentor Conrad, errs by laying an "over-emphasis on the betrayal theme" in A Grain of Wheat, but concludes even more pejoratively that:

> Ngugi does not have the mastery of language which, together with other qualities, makes Conrad one of the greatest of novelists. Though Conrad's syntax is not simple, his sentences have such balance, polish and ease that they are admirable structures in themselves. Meaning is never obscured.[26]

It would be foolish, of course, for one to suggest that studies of literary influence are irrelevant or for one to adopt a paranoiac position with respect to that question. Influence studies are perfectly legitimate and are in fact essential but we need more studies in the manner of Jabbi's essay on Conrad and Ngugi, a study which is exemplary not only because it gives a well-documented demonstration of the ways in which Conrad did influence Ngugi but, more significantly, because it clearly shows the manner in which Ngugi makes artistic use of such influences. It is indeed satisfying to note that the conclusions drawn in Jabbi's study are not based on cringing servility to either Conrad or Ngugi but rather on a proper assessment of the literary relationship between the two writers.[27]

A comparative method, of course, need not be restricted to influence studies. As I suggested in chapter one, there is definite need for more generic approaches in studies of the African novel, and there can be no doubt that the comparative procedure is most useful for such an approach. By way of illustration I shall briefly show how a proper comparative analysis can add more to the meanings of two generically-related and often misunderstood African novels--Ouologuem's Le Devoir de violence[28] and Armah's Two Thousand Seasons.[29] It is common knowledge in African literary circles that both Ouologuem and Armah have been condemned, on several occasions, for their attempts to portray aspects of African history in fictional form. Some critical comments made by Phanuel Egejuru on Ouologuem and Bernth Lindfors on Armah are typical of such denunciations. Writing about Le Devoir de violence, Egejuru states that:

> In his novel, Ouologuem paints a most grim and disgraceful picture of Nakem [read: Africa].... Whereas most African writers deem it their responsibility to correct the false images that Europeans have about Africa, Ouologuem made a deliberate effort to corroborate these false impressions in his bid to write a different and intriguing story for a European audience.[30]

In like manner, Bernth Lindfors castigates Armah for what Lindfors perceives as both a distortion of history and a racist perspective in Two Thousand Seasons:

> The villains in this stark melodrama are portrayed as the obverse of the heroes. This may be a dramatic necessity, in as much as one needs very potent

> Manichean forces to overwhelm such a superabundance of virtue as is said to have existed in pre-historic Africa. But it also assumes that entire races of people can be reduced on the level of primal forces, that can be characterized as inherently predisposed toward good, another addicted to evil.[31]

It is significant that the major reason why both of these scholars indict Ouologuem and Armah is the novelists' use of distortion to present what Lindfors calls a "cartoon history of Africa." True to what these critics say, many of the scenes in both novels are gross exaggerations. Two brief passages from Le Devoir de violence and Two Thousand Seasons will serve as examples. The narrator in the Ouologuem novel describes a typical scene as follows:

> En cet age de féodalité, pour chanter leur dévotion à la justice seigneuriale, de grandes communautés d'esclaves voyaient outre le travail forcé, quantité des leurs se laisser emmurer vifs, englués du sang d'enfants égorgés et de femmes enceintes éventrées .... Non loin des corps de la horde des enfants égorgés, on comptait dix-sept foetus expulsés par les viscères béant de mères en agonies, violée, sous les regards des Fous, par leurs époux, qui se donnaient ensuite, écrasés de honte, la mort.
>
> Le Devoir, p.10.

Exaggeration also characterizes many scenes in Two Thousand Seasons as this description of some of the "sexual pleasures" of the Arab "predators" shows:

> Great was the pleasure of these lucky Arab predators as with extended tongue they vied to see who could with the greatest ease scoop out buttered dates stuck cunningly into the genitals of our women lined up for just this their pleasant competition. From the same fragrant vessels they preferred the eating of other delicious food: meatballs still warm off the fire, their heat making our women squirm with a sensuousness all the more inflammatory to the predators' desire. The dawa drug itself the predators licked from the youngest virgin genitals--licked with a furious appetite.
>
> Two Thousand Seasons, p.21

Now, it is remarkable that though critics have generally pointed out the presence of distortion in these works, nearly all of the critics seem to forget that exaggeration and distortion have been essential ingredients in various forms of literature from the earliest times. From passages such as the biblical narratives describing the the exploits of the Israelites or the Homeric accounts of events presented in both The Iliad and The Odyssey through medieval romance and the writings of Swift and Voltaire, and on to Orwell, Huxley, and others of the twentieth-century, it can be seen that an effective use of the

grotesque has indeed been a major factor for the success of certain literary classics. But it is also clear that because critics of both the Ouologuem and Armah novels have often limited themselves only to the literal level of meaning and more importantly because they seem to read these texts without any consideration for literary affinities between these African novels and fictional works in other literary traditions, the critics have invariably misunderstood or even failed to notice the all-important structural use of satire by Ouologuem and Armah.

It is amazing how scholars, who ordinarily would never think of accepting either Gulliver's narration of his experiences or Candide's description of events in Voltaire's work as truth, suddenly seem to believe Ouologuem's and Armah's distorted portraits. The truth of the matter, however, is that these two novelists are consciously using deformation as a structural method in these historical novels. Le Devoir de violence and Two Thousand Seasons undoubtedly portray a distorted history of Africa but they are also not what most critics have made them out to be. Le Devoir de violence has far more artistic worth than that of a book which was merely written to satisfy the vagaries of a racist, foreign, "bourgeois" audience. Correspondingly, Armah's Two Thousand Seasons has more to it than a mere depiction of Arabs and Europeans as being "addicted to evil." Ouologuem and Armah have purposely used one powerful component of satire--misstatement--to introduce a new element into the realm of the African historical novel.

It is true, as Lindfors points out, that Armah shows a distinctly different approach to history from Achebe's and that unlike Armah:

> Achebe shows us complex human beings entangled in a web of circumstances that ultimately brings disaster to rural Igbo society. The individuals portrayed cannot be divided into two camps--the saints versus the sinners--but rather can be recognized as quite ordinary people motivated by fairly commonplace ambitions and desires.[32]

But while one cannot deny that Armah's (and Ouologuem's) characters, events and situations lack the masterful sense of mimesis which is so evident in both Things Fall Apart and

Arrow of God, it will be equally inaccurate to suggest that Armah is wrong for using a different narrative strategy. Achebe's technique is different but not necessarily superior to Armah's (or Ouologuem's for that matter).

It is necessary to emphasize this point because, aside from showing a basic weakness in the arguments of both Egejuru and Lindfors it helps reiterate the main thrust of my argument. If critics had thought of the analogous use of satire in works such as Candide or Nineteen Eighty Four they would have been able to recognize Armah's and Ouologuem's structural use of distortion to bring home their message. It is also required at this point to emphasize that, largely as a result of the satirical venom that is poured on the "nobles" (European, African, and Arab) and their lackeys, it is amply clear that Armah's and Ouologuem's objects of attack are not the European, African, and Arab peoples but the exploitative ruling and commercial classes of these races. In my view, the basic themes of these two novels centre on the exploitation of African peoples by African, Arab and European aristocracies and bourgeoisies; it therefore follows that these books are neither racist diatribes against all Europeans and Arabs nor African treatises on self-hatred as some critics would have us believe. In other words, if critics used a less racially-defensive and a more literary approach, more enlightening meanings and less heat could have been generated from both Armah's and Ouologuem's novels.

What can be derived from the examples referred to in this chapter is that there is definitely an urgent need for more comparative studies on the African novel. The illustrations also show that a comparative method using both non-African and African texts should not mean searching for the "masters" of African writers (as both Adeola James and C.P. Sarvan imply); rather it should involve a genuine search for literary connections among the various cultural traditions, and for ways in which a simultaneous assessment of literatures in these traditions can help towards a better understanding of literature as a global phenomenon.

A. Notes

[1] Adeola James, rev.of An Introduction to the African Novel by Eustace Palmer, African Literature Today, 7 (1975), 151. In addition to Adeola James' rejection of references to European fiction because of what she implies will turn out to be a neo-colonial literary relationship, other critics such as Joseph Okpaku have also called for the development of a distinctive set of standards (based on an African aesthetic) for African literature. See, for example, Joseph Okpaku, "Culture and Criticism: African Critical Standards for African Literature and the Arts," Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts, No.3 (Spring, 1967), 1-15. The theme of the 1980 annual African Literature Association conference held at Gainesville, Florida, was "Defining the African Aesthetic." Because certain essays in the volume of selected papers from that conference deal in great detail with the debate on the kind of role a racial or continental aesthetic should or does play in criticism and also because such an argument goes beyond the scope of my present undertaking I have decided not to deal directly with the subject.
See Towards Defining the African Aesthetic Proc. of the 6th Annual Conference of the African Literature Association, 9-12 April 1980, (Washington, D.C: Three Continents Press, 1982).

[2] Charles R. Larson, The Emergence of African Fiction (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 20-26.

[3] Although by the end of his study (p.277), Larson joins critics he had condemned in his first chapter by making the same condescending conclusion that "with Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah, the African novel as a literary genre moves into the main stream of the western tradition...," he, nevertheless gives a good summary of some types of paternalistic "appreciation" that had been made of African fiction (pages 5-16 of Emergence). On the problem of the use of the term "universal" as a mask for Eurocentric critical approaches see Donatus Nwoga's stimulating piece on "The limitations of Universal Critical Criteria," Ufahamu, 1V, No.1 (Summer 1979), 10-33.

[4] E.D. Blodgett, "The Canadian Literatures in a Comparative Perspective," Essays on Canadian writing, 15 (Summer 1979), 13.

[5] Solomon Ogbede Iyasere, rev. of The Emergence of African Fiction by Charles Larson, African Literature Today, 7 (1975), 143-46. Iyasere points out that though Larson overstates his case and "turns too quickly from critic to apologist" (p. 146), on the positive side Larson's study calls attention to a hitherto neglected area in the criticism of African fiction: "Larson, in demonstrating the uniqueness and vitality of African contemporary literature, stresses the influence of the oral tradition--influences which most critics have ignored" (p. 143).

Eustace Palmer, "The Criticism of African Fiction: Its Nature and Function," International Fiction Review, 1 (1974), 112-19. Palmer refers to the many interesting contributions Professor Larson's book makes to the criticism of African fiction. But Dr. Palmer also finds many deficiences in some of Larson's arguments.

[6] Larson, Emergence, pp.16-26.

[7] Dan S. Izevbaye, "The State of Criticism in African Literature," African Literature Today, 7 (1975), 4.

[8] Chinua Achebe, Morning Yet on Creation Day (Garden City, New York: Johnson, 1967), p. 8.

[9] Blodgett, 11.

[10] --------, 11.

[11] Adrian Roscoe, Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 71-131. In his chapter on "West African Prose," Roscoe discusses only the works of writers such as Achebe, Ekwensi, Okara, Abioseh Nicol, Fagunwa, Tutuola and Nkem Nwankwo--all anglophones. True to a disclaimer in his preface, Roscoe gives occasional nods to some francophone West African writers such as Beti, Dadié, Birago and David Diop, and Senghor. However, his references to these writers and their works are so sketchy that they can only be described as being negligible in Roscoe's study.

[12] Emmanuel Obiechina, Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 35-36.

[13] --------, pp. 35-36.

[14] Palmer, Growth, p. 159. At a time when Beti had already published at least two more novels after Le Roi miraculé--Perpétue ou l'habitude du malheur (1974) and Remember Ruben (1974)--Palmer was still suggesting by 1979 that "it remains to be seen whether [Le Roi miraculé] really marks the decline of Mongo Beti." For a detailed and up to date account of Beti's creative output after Le Roi miraculé see Stephen Arnold's "The New Mongo Beti," a paper originally delivered at the 1980 Philadelphia meeting of the African Studies association meeting and now due for publication in the Spring 1984 issue of Africana Journal.

[15] Palmer, Growth, p. 60.

[16] E.C. Nwezeh, "A comparative Approach to Modern African Literature," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, 28 (1979), 20-25.

[17] Albert Gérard, "New Frontier for Comparative Literature: Africa," Komparatistische Hefte (Bayreuth), 1 (1980), 8-13.

[18] Scholars including Obiechina (in Culture, Tradition and Society) and Palmer (in both his Introduction to and Growth of the African Novel) have echoed the views of J.P. Clark who in 1962 suggested that of all the literary genres now used in African literature the novel form is the one that was never indigenous to Africa. See J.P. Clark, "Our Literary Critics," Nigeria Magazine, 74 (1962), 79-82.

[19] S.K. Dabo, "A Comparative Study of the Treatment of Human Relationships in Fiction by Modern African Writers in English and French," B.Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1967.

[20] Edris Makward, "Negro-African Novelists: A Comparative Study of Themes and Influences in Novels by Africans in French and English," Diss. Ibadan University, 1968.

[21] Otto Bischofsberger, Tradition und Wandel aus der Sicht der Romanschriftsteller Kameruns und Nigerias (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Etzel-Druck, 1968).

[22] Bu-Buakei Jabbi, "Conrad's Influence on Betrayal in A Grain of Wheat," Research in African Literatures, Vol. X1, No.1 (Spring 1980), 50-83.

[23] Richard Bjornson, "Realism in Perspective," Papers in Comparative Studies, Vol.1, No.1

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[24] Palmer, Growth, p.5. See also Bernard Mouralis, "Le Roman négro-africain et les modèles occidentaux," Présence Francophone, 2 (1971), 5.

[25] Some notable exceptions include: A.G. Stock, "Yeats and Achebe," Journal of Commonwealth Literature, 5 (1968), 105-111
Steven Jervis, "Tradition and Change in Hardy and Achebe," Black Orpheus, 2, v/vi (1971), 31-38.

[26] Ponnuthurai C. Sarvan, "Under African Eyes," Conradiana, 8 (1976), 239.

[27] Jabbi, 80.

[28] Yambo Ouologuem, Le Devoir de violence (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968). All references are to this edition which I shall abbreviate as Le Devoir after long quotes.

[29] Ayi Kwei Armah, Two Thousand Seasons (London: Heinemann, 1979). This text was first published by the East African Publishing House in 1973, but I shall be referring to the 1979 edition.

[30] Phanuel Egejuru, Black writers: White Audience. A Critical Approach to African Literature (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1978), pp.160-61.

[31] Bernth Lindfors, "Armah's Histories," African Literature Today, 11 (1980), 89-90.

[32] --------, 90.

IV. Types of the Novel of Personal Development in Europe: Analogues to the Emerging West African Sub-Genre

The closest analogues in European literature to the West African Novel of Personal Development are the Bildungsroman and its close cousins (the Entwicklungsroman or "roman d'apprentissage," the Erziehungsroman, and the Künstleroman), so a discussion of these literary sub-categories will give us a loose paradigm and descriptive lexicon for a study of this sub-genre that has been developing in West Africa over the last twenty five years. To start this discussion a very brief plot summary of Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre is useful because of that novel's primacy in all assessments not only of the Bildungsroman but also of other related sub-genres of the novel. In other words, the legacy of Wilhelm Meister and especially its implications for genre theory and criticism make it imperative for us to have not only at least the barest outline of the novel but also a brief idea of the debate over the nature of the Bildungsroman as genre in mind when confronting a subject such as this study.

The main "event sequence" of Goethe's novel has been described as follows:

> Wilhelm Meister, a young man of bourgeois background, has since childhood been fascinated by the theater.... He is also desperately in love with a young actress called Marianne, but he is subsequently persuaded to break the relationship when he observes her, as he thinks, being unfaithful to him. This bitter blow is not the end of Wilhelm's involvement with the theater, however. A business trip undertaken on his father's behalf brings him into contact with a group of actors, and he puts up the money to establish the troupe as a going concern. After many vicissitudes, Wilhelm and his fellow actors join Serlo's theatrical company. This new collaboration bears fruit in a production of Hamlet, but Wilhelm gradually becomes estranged from the theater.... The second section of the novel... shows us how Wilhelm gradually moves away from the theater, how he becomes increasingly drawn to an aristocratic world which has its center and controlling purpose in a secret society, the so-called Society of the Tower. Wilhelm is admitted to this society, and, after much error and uncertainty, finally finds true fulfillment in marrying Nathalie, the sister of Lothario, one of the most energetic and forceful members of the Society of the Tower.[1]

Debate on the Nature of the sub-genre.

Until very recently the dominant critical opinion was that the Bildungsroman is a particular type of novel which not only grew out of specific historical circumstances in

Germany but has remained, in fact, a peculiarly German phenomenon. Two major reasons are often given for this view and, as we will see from statements made by the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey and by Thomas Mann respectively, this is a view that has been shared by some of Germany's most respected men of letters. For Dilthey, there is a direct connection between the Bildungsroman and the German people:

> So sprechen diese Bildungsroman den individualismus einer Kultur aus, die Interessensphäre des Privatlebens einegeschränkt ist. Das macktwirken des Staates in Beamtentum und Militärwesen stand in den deutschen Mittel-und Kleinstaaten dem jungen Geschlecht der Schriftsteller als eine fremde Gewalt gegenüber. Man entzuckte und berauschte sich an den Entdeckungen der Dichter in der Welt des Individuums und seiner Selbstbildung[2].

Now while Dilthey sees the "individualism and interest in self-cultivation valued by German culture" as being the necessary attribute of the Bildungsroman, Thomas Mann goes one stage farther. He suggests that, unlike Germany, the "public and political orientation of Western Europe (France and England) has produced the panoramic novel of social criticism:"

> The finest characteristic of the typical German, the best-known and also the most flattering to his self-esteem, is his inwardness. It is no accident that it was the Germans who gave to the world the intellectually stimulating and very humane literary form which we call the novel of personal cultivation and development. Western Europe has its novel of social criticism, to which the Germans regard this other type as their own social counterpart; it is at the same time an autobiography, a confession. The inwardness, the culture ("bildung") of a German implies introspectiveness, and an individualistic cultural conscience; consideration for the careful tending, the shaping, deepening and perfecting of one's personality or, in religious terms, for the salvation and justification of one's own life; subjectivism in the things of the mind.[3]

Dilthey and Mann, of course, are not the only theorists who consider the Bildungsroman as being uniquely German. Some contemporary critics such as François Jost,[4] Jeffrey Sammons,[5] and Henry Hatfield[6] express views that are similar to Dilthey's and Mann's.

There is another school of critical thought which argues that if less rigid critical criteria were used, the Bildungsroman can be found almost anywhere in the world. Critics such as Hans Wagner,[7] G.B. Tennyson,[8] Bernard N. Schilling,[9] Jerome H. Buckley,[10] Jürgen Jacobs,[11] Martin Swales,[12] Marianne Hirsch,[13] and Susan Suleiman [14] have as their main contention, the notion that the Bildungsroman, though having its historical roots in

Germany, did not remain an exclusively Teutonic form. Rather, these critics argue, novels in the Wilhelm Meister tradition appeared and have continued to appear in other parts of Europe and even in places outside that continent. In my view, Martin Swales best articulates the reason why they think that the peculiar qualities of the Bildungsroman should be used more as a tool of discovery among novels from various parts of the world:

> ... the German Bildungsroman, like any other genre, has historical specificity. I do not, however wish to deny that the genre construct can also be used in a taxonomic context, that it can serve as a heuristic tool which makes possible the comparison of a number of texts which stand in no readily identifiable historical relationship with one another.[15]

For those scholars who suggest that the apprenticeship novel is and has remained strictly the product of the eighteenth-century concept of Bildung, the Bildungsroman is mainly (or should one say only) made up of German novels such as Wieland's Agathon (1767; even though that work obviously pre-dates the accepted prototype), Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Stifter's Nachsommer (1857), and some twentieth-century texts such as Mann's Der Zauberberg (1924) and Hesse's Das Glasperlenspiel (1947).

On the other hand, the second group of critics maintains that because of thematic and structural affinities between most of the novels mentioned above and other European novels one should categorize the Bildungsroman as at least a European type of the novel. As a result of such links, say these critics, the following novels, among others, should be seen as apprenticeship novels: Carlyle's Sartor Resartus (1834), Balzac's Le Père Goriot (1834-35),and Les Illusions perdues (1837-43), Dickens' David Copperfield (1850),and Great Expectations (1861), Thackeray's Pendennis (1850), George Eliot's Mill on the Floss (1859), Butler's Way of All Flesh (1903), Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, Maugham's Of Human Bondage (1915), and Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916).

Problem of Definition.

As with most literary terminology, there has been the problem of having a precise meaning for the Bildungsroman. This problem is particularly evident in non-German

languages where the characteristic German precision of defining concepts is lacking. For instance, in most English or French literary handbooks the Bildungsroman, apprenticeship novel or "roman d'apprentissage" is often defined in rather vague terms. A typical definition of the Bildungsroman in English reads: "A novel that deals with the development of a young person as he grows up."[16] The French definition is not as vague but it still lacks the exactness of the German. In French the "roman d'apprentissage" is described as a novel which "s'attachera à décrire le développement d'une personalité où l'on presque toujours reconnaît celle de l'auteur. L'Education progressive d'une jeune âme réceptive et malléable, assez passive, qui ne cessera de s'enrichir moralement et spirituellement au hasard des circonstances, tout en demeurant indéfinitivement disponible et inachevée."[17]

It is generally agreed, however, that in German critical lexicons there are at least three different types of novels which fulfill the roles normally attributed to what I am calling the Novel of Personal Development (read: Novel of Education, Youth, Adolescence, or Apprenticeship) in non-German countries. These three categories are identified as: a) The Bildungsroman or "the novel of self-cultivation and harmonious development," b) the Entwicklungsroman, a novel which also deals with the development of a young person but which does not have the quest for self-culture as an essential component and in which overall growth is not necessarily a specific goal, c) the Erziehungsroman or "novel of education"--a type of novel whose special emphasis is on the pedagogic training of a young person and which therefore treats other aspects of development as secondary issues. A further category, the Künstlerroman should perhaps be mentioned. This kind of novel centres on depicting the early leanings of a young artist.[18]

It is thus understandable that, as a result of the particular historical circumstances surrounding the genesis and subsequent development of the Bildungsroman and also because of the need for precision in characterizing the term in non-German languages, critics who regard the Bildungsroman as a European (or even global) genre or sub-genre have sometimes come under critical fire. For example, Jeffrey Sammons, who considers

this type of novel as being uniquely German, views attempts by other critics to make generic links among novels such as Wilhelm Meister, Les Illusions perdues and Great Expectations as deliberate endeavours to stretch certain novels to suit a prescribed thesis. Sammons' primary reason (and his position is representative of that school of thought) is that the concept of Bildung as developed in Germany by the end of the eighteenth-century requires the complete, all-round (i.e. physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) development of a young person. Bildung should thus translate into an overall maturation process filled with optimism for the character's future. Accordingly, Sammons argues that:

> ... the term loses specificity if we allow it to apply to any novel recounting the history of a young person entering upon life and the world. The connotations of Bildung then lose their force, and the term becomes a candidate for Ocam's Razor.[19]

Indeed, Professor Sammons' objections are quite justified for, as we can see in Marianne Hirsch's well-argued essay on "The Novel of Formation as Genre," there is a certain danger when critics try to subsume some texts which may only be vaguely related to a particular literary kind. Even though Hirsch's theory of the Bildungsroman is quite convincing, it is difficult to accept her inclusion of Austen's Emma among European apprenticeship novels.[20]

There is no doubt that Emma does possess certain elements of that type of novel. Indeed, in many ways that novel can be seen as a story depicting the moral and mental growth of a young woman. Among other things, Emma is the study of the progress and eventual disappearance of the heroine's snobbery as well as the consequences of her self-delusion. As the story progresses we do see Emma's mental and moral development; we realize that, though she starts off not only as a snob of the worst kind but also as a character with an extremely wayward imagination, by the end of the novel she has grown to become a much more considerate, chastened, in fact, mature woman. We notice, for example, that she becomes quite decent and respectful to Miss Bates to whom she had been very rude on previous occasions. She is also quite willing now to admit her error in interfering in the Robert Martin-Harriet Smith affair, and finally it is also true that after

going through what can be termed a process of redemption Emma marries the admirable Mr. Knightley with whom she is going to start a new life.

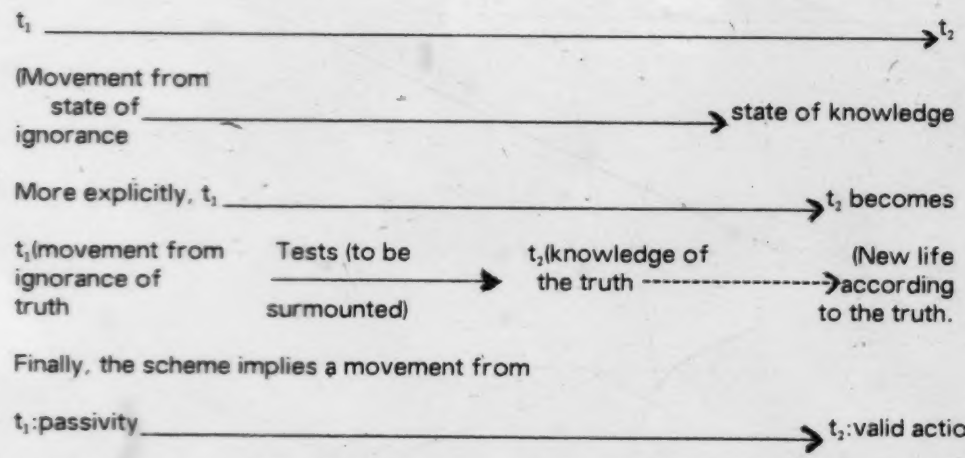
In spite of these Bildungsromanesque qualities in Emma, I do not think it should be called an apprenticeship novel. Rather, because of Austen's moral earnestness, and also because of her heavy emphasis on and powerful demonstration of the disastrous effects of snobbery and class consciousness, and lastly because of the rather narrow (even provincial) nature of Highbury society, Emma should be regarded more as a novel of social criticism than as a Bildungsroman.

Characteristics of the Novel of Personal Development.

Because the West African Novels of Personal Development I shall be dealing with do not portray the concept of Bildung (overall maturation process and the acquisition of culture) as do novels generally accepted as Bildungsromane (Der Zauberberg for example), and also because of some serious objections that have recently been raised about works that can actually be said to belong to this sub-genre, I have avoided the categorization of these novels as Bildungsromane.[21] Rather, I have chosen to describe the works I am dealing with as Novels of Personal Development. In order to understand the reason for the choice of this term I will refer the reader to a definition of the "roman d'apprentissage" (a concept which closely approximates though is not necessarily identical to the Novel of Personal Development), by Susan Suleiman. As we will see from a brief discussion of some European novels--Wilhelm Meister Lehrjare, Le Père Goriot, Great Expectations, and Of Human Bondage--the use of a relatively flexible definition such as this one allows the reader to see closer generic connections among works that might not otherwise have been seen as being generically related--a point I will be emphasising throughout the study.

In an essay on the structure of the "roman d'apprentissage" Susan Suleiman posits two basic types of apprenticeship novels, i.e. "positive" and "negative." According to her, a positive apprenticeship novel is one in which "tout apprentissage... mène le héros vers les

valeurs inhérentes à la doctrine qui fonde le roman." If we accept that by the end of these four novels the individual hero's apprenticeship has led him to the basic world view of the novelist, then we can also see that all of these novels have the basic structural pattern that Suleiman proposes for the positive type of novel of development. That structural pattern is represented by the following:



Finally, the scheme implies a movement from

t_1:passivity $\longrightarrow$ t_2:valid action.[22]

In terms of these four European novels, it can be seen that each protagonist starts from a position of ignorance of the novelistic truth and after a series of "tests" is able to move away from such ignorance into a position of self-illumination from which a new and wiser life is destined, thus corresponding to Suleiman's pattern.

In Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre,[23] the stages of innocence and complete ignorance are seen from the beginning of the novel to the scene where the young Wilhelm comes into contact with the group of actors. Up to this point it is Wilhelm's ignorance of the ways of the world that is stressed. We see this in his childish attachment to puppets, his infatuation with Marianne, the narrator's constant reminder that the hero "war jung und neu in der Welt"[24] as well as in the young man's attitude towards his vocation. On the one hand, when his love life with Marianne seems to be going well, his attitude is one of idealistic fervor for the stage. According to the narrator:

> [Wilhelm's] Bestimmung zum Theater war ihm nunmehr klar; das hohe Ziel, das er sich vorgesteckt sah, schien ihm näher, indem er an Marianens Hand honstrebte, und in selbstgefällige Bescheidenheit erblickte er in sich den trefflichen

> Schauspieler, den Schöpfer eines künftigen Nationaltheaters, nach dem er so vielfältig hatte seufzen hören.[25]
>
> Wilhelm Meister p.35

On the other hand, the moment Wilhelm suspects that Marianne is cheating on him he rashly decides to abandon the theatre. He not only burns the plays he had written and admired, he also says:

> Ich gebe einen Beweis ... dass es mir Ernst sei, eine Handwerk aufzugeben, wozu ich nicht geboren ward.[26]
>
> Wilhelm Meister, p.35

The remaining three novels also show scenes that are clearly the structural parallels of those depicting Wilhelm's naiveté. In Great Expectations,[27] Dickens carefully demonstrates the purity of the young Pip in most of the scenes that precede the boy's first visit to Satis House. Pip's initial encounter with Magwitch (in the marshes), gives a portrayal of the boy's innocence. He genuinely believes Magwitch when the latter tells him that Compeyson (the other convict) will tear out Pip's heart if he (Pip) reveals any knowledge about Magwitch's whereabouts. But pip's innocence is most vividly described in the scene where, after stealing some brandy, some "victuals" and Joe's file for Magwitch, the adolescent Pip describes his guilt-ridden feelings as he goes to meet the convict:

> The mist was heavier yet when I got out upon the marshes, so that instead of my running at everything, everything seemed to run at me. This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dykes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be "A boy with somebody else's porkpie. Stop him." The cattle came upon me with like suddenness staring out of their eyes, and steaming out of their nostrils, "Halloa, young thief." One black ox, with a white cravat on--who even had to my awakened conscience something of a clerical air--fixed me so obstinately with his eyes, and moved his blunt head round in such an accusatory manner as I moved around that I blubbered out to him, "I couldn't help it sir. It wasn't for myself I took it." Upon which he put down his head, blew a cloud of smoke out of his nose, and vanished with a kick-up of his hind legs and a flourish of his tail.
>
> Great Expectations, p. 15

There can be no doubt that a scene such as this performs the same structural function as the scenes referred to in the Goethe novel. The same can be said of Le Père Goriot[28] where, even in the absence of a description of Rastignac's early life in the

province, we are shown how within six weeks of his arriving to live in Paris the young man whom Mme. de Beauséant describes as "ce pauvre enfant qui est si nouvellement jeté dans le monde, qu'il ne comprend rien", is able to shed his innocence and develop a more positive philosophy of life.

A final example of this structural pattern can be found in Maugham's Of Human Bondage.[29] As with the other apprenticeship novels, the introductory passages of this novel (notably those depicting scenes before Philip Carey's departure for Germany) are used to accentuate the protagonist's simplicity. For instance, Philip, being too young to discern the nature and implications of death, does not even understand his nurse, Emma, when she informs him about the death of his mother. In fact, the young boy cries only because he sees his nurse crying. The extent of Philip's naiveté is shown again in several other scenes but it will be enough if I refer to just two more incidents--the scene where the boy literally accepts the biblical metaphor about faith moving mountains as gospel truth and the time, in Germany, when he exhibits tremendous insecurity in his initial dealings with the daughters of his hosts, the Erlin family.

Looking at the end of Wilhelm Meister one can easily see how such an ending fits into the formal pattern Suleiman has suggested. As Goethe's novel progresses to its close, all of what Wilhelm had been learning is made more explicit to him. He now understands, for example, that he is actually the father of Felix, the boy he had been caring for all along; more importantly, he discerns that, by withdrawing from the theatre, he has not abandoned his vocation, but is in fact more fully prepared for it. He realizes that his true calling is not simply to found and remain within the narrow confines of a national theatre; with the help of an all-round development he now realizes that he should give fuller outward service to society. In the words of the narrator:

> Er wusste nichte, dass es die Art aller der Menschen sei, denen an ihrer innern Bildung viel gelegen ist, dass sie die äusseren Verhältnisse ganz und gar vernachlässigen. Wilhelm hatte sich in diesem Falle befunden; er schien nunmehr zum erstenmal zu merken, dass er äusserer Hülfsmittel bedürfe, um nachhaltig zu wirken.[30]
>
> Wilhelm Meister, p.491

It is therefore fitting that with this latter realization on Wilhelm's part and also as a result of his other actions, he is not only admitted into the prestigious and aristocratic Turm GesllSchaft (Society of Tower), from which it is assumed he will be able to serve society better, but his own prospects for a future happy life seem assured by his marriage to Nathalie.

The closing scenes of Le Père Goriot, Great Expectations, and Of Human Bondage show endings that are structurally similar to Wilhelm Meister. The narration of Rastignac's eventual disillusionment with Paris and especially his determination to go into combat with the Parisian upper class (whom he now considers as leeches and vampires) are Balzac's ways of suggesting Rastignac's final growth into self-awareness. Notwithstanding the controversy that has often surrounded Dickens' rather sentimental addition to the end of Great Expectations (i.e. Pip's eventual marriage to Estella), it is clear that by the novel's end Pip has undergone a complete process of change. The things that really come out at this point are Pip's basically generous and good impulses. The hero is shown as a young man ready to go into the world with a clear understanding of what concepts such as love, humility, self-worth and so forth mean. Finally, we observe that like Pip, Rastignac, and Wilhelm, Philip Carey is depicted in a moment of great revelation as the Maugham novel comes to an end. Philip realizes that even though he is now genuinely acting out of his own volition for the first time, he now understands that self-conscious actions should also involve a considerate, at times even selfless concern for others. Thus when he goes to meet Sally Athelny at the National Gallery, genuine feelings of love and kindliness dictate his actions:

> He realized that he had deceived himself; it was no self-sacrifice that had driven him to think of marrying but the desire for a wife and a home and love; and now that it all seemed to slip through his fingers he was seized with despair. He wanted all that more than anything in the world.
>
> Of Human Bondage, p. 606

The formal connection between this passage and the one describing how "dass er [Wilhelm] äusser Hülfsmittel bedürfe," (he stood in need of outward means) can hardly be

missed.

With such an ending, one can say without exaggeration that Roy Pascal's comment about the Bildungsroman being a "story of the formation of a character up to the moment when he ceases to be self-centred and becomes society-centred, thus beginning to shape his true self,"[31] holds equally true for the Novel of Personal Development. For the protagonists in these apprenticeship novels to move from this self-centred to a society-centred position, they have to go through a process of worldly education. In structural terms Susan Suleiman sees this period of learning as the main connecting link between the initial period of innocence and ignorance and the final one of self-illumination.

Now, the idea of going through a test should suggest a situation of confrontation or struggle but, as Suleiman points out, in the "roman d'apprentissage," "surmonter l'épreuve, ce n'est rien de plus--mais rien de moins--que découvrir le sens, donner la bonne interprétation."[32] It is the hero's process of learning the ways of the world and eventually giving a correct interpretation of these ways that constitute the second and bulkiest structural section of the apprenticeship novel. A few examples will again show the structural links between Wilhelm Meister and some of its generic kindred.

Wilhelm's education really begins when he goes on the second business trip. He first of all realizes that his initial, even if instinctive, dislike for commerce and trade was right. Not surprisingly, he now mistakenly assumes that his true vocation is in the theatre. It is, however, through his association with the theatrical group (whose day to day activities can be seen as microcosmic representations of human activity) that Wilhelm is exposed to real life. Just like other apprenticeship heroes, Wilhelm's vision of reality is gradually shattered from a state of illusory perception to one of down-to-earth, realistic assessment. For instance, there is a remarkable change in Wilhelm's overall attitude towards his destiny and the future after his second encounter with the old clergyman. Just as in their previous discussion, Wilhelm refuses to agree with the clergyman's ironically secular interpretation of human activity. But, even though Wilhelm does not seem to

accept the old man's exhortation that "das Schicksal... ist ein vornehmer, aber teurer Hofmeister" and that "Ich würde mich immer lieber an die Vernunft eines menschlichen Meisters halten" (p. 121),[33] the young man's later actions seem to be based on the clergyman's precepts. As we see from events in the novel it is Wilhelm's earthly experiences and not some abstractions like fate that guide his actions. Thus it is partly as a result of his experiences with the group of actors that Goethe's hero decides to discontinue looking at the theatre as the surest way of giving full extension to his personality. Aside from personally experiencing the human shortcomings (such as ingratitude, mercenary actions) in the world of the theatre, Wilhelm also gets worldly instruction from characters such as Nathalie. She, while recounting her experiences, exposes the naive Wilhelm to a whole array of human beings whose actions are supposed to teach the young man some lessons on "human nature." Finally, Wilhelm gets similar instruction when he reads the confessions of the "Schöne Seele" (fair saint).

In Great Expectations, the scenes showing Pip's experiences from the time of his first visit to Miss Havisham's right up to the time he finally realizes that he is responsible for Magwitch's safety can be seen as the formal equivalents of those episodes just referred to in Wilhelm Meister. As Buckley observes, "Pip's deliberate pursuit of his objective [that of becoming a gentleman] recalls Wilhelm Meister's dedication to self-culture. But whereas ideal was reasoned and coherent, Pip's is ill-conceived and naively developed."[34] We see that Pip has to learn from his own experiences that the process of becoming a gentleman does not and should not entail snobbery, condescension, hypocrisy and pretentious behaviour. This is the true test that Pip has to overcome in order to prove one of Dickens' main points in the novel, i.e. demonstrating that it should be possible for an honest working-class boy to rise and become a gentleman in society. Several of the activities in which Pip either participates or is witness to are often despicable and ludicrous but this is is Dickens' way of removing the blinkers from Pip's eyes. For the greater part of this transition section Pip has a distorted notion of what

it means to get on well in life; he associates the good life with snobbery and social acceptabilty. For instance, when Pip learns of his expectations he wants Joe to be educated but this is because he feels that it is only with "education" that Joe can become socially acceptable.

Before Pip hears of his expectations, a true feeling of camaraderie had existed between him and Joe but the moment Pip has some financial advantage over Joe, he starts calling the blacksmith "dear good old fellow." Even though various episodes of this nature can be enumerated (for example, Pip's demonstration of shame and dread when Joe visits him in London, or the young man's rude and ungentlemanly behaviour to his real benefactor), I think it is more significant to show briefly how, as in other apprenticeship novels, Pip learns the ways of the world through his encounters with people and events in various places.

The more Pip strives to attain gentlemanly status through pride, patronizing behaviour and self-delusion, the more Dickens allows the other characters to lead him on the path to the right way. For example, when Pip, who is ashamed of the humble and gentlemanly Joe because of the latter's simplicity, starts being condescending to Joe (during Joe's visit to Barnard Inn), it is Herbert (though no relative or friend of Joe's) who shows Pip what his own behaviour should have been. Similarly, when Pip visits Satis House from London, he fails to fulfill his promise of paying Joe a visit at the forge. He snobbishly avoids his former, humble home, but the incident with Trabb's boy, grotesque as it is, is used to show Pip the ridiculous effects of snobbery. And Pip's lessons go on and on; he is able to observe the ludicrous consequences of pretentious class distinction on characters such as his sister, Mrs. Gargery, Uncle Pumblechook, and Mrs Pocket. The young man is also able to see the damaging results of a rigorous pursuit of material wealth on Mr. Jaggers, and the disastrous outcome of extreme self-centredness and naiveté on Miss Havisham. On the other hand, Biddy's and Joe's general comportment serve as excellent demonstrations of goodness, love, and friendship for Pip.

Balzac's Rastignac and Maugham's Philip Carey also go through individual tests in order to be initiated into the mature adult world. Rastignac, like Pip, goes into the big city where he loses all his innocence and, in typical Balzacian style, the narrator informs us about Rastignac's "education" in Paris:

> Entre le boudouir bleu de Madame de Restaud et le salon rose de Madame de Beauséant il [Rastignac] avait fait trois années de ce Droit parisien dont on ne parle pas, quoiqu'il constitue une haute jurisprudence sociale qui, bien apprise et bien pratiquée, mène à tout.
>
> Le Père Goriot, p. 86.

It cannot be said that Rastignac is totally innocent because, upon his arrival in Paris, he seems ready to lead his family back into the nobility either professionally (through his studies and hard work) or socially (through opportunism or nepotism). His predominating naive side is shown however as his illusions about social climbing are progressively destroyed. As he gets to know Paris, Rastignac becomes more and more aware that the price of upward social mobility is much more than he had previously imagined.

We are told, for example, that when Rastignac learns of the ungrateful, King Lear-like manner in which le père Goriot has been treated by his daughters "quelques larmes roulèrent dans les yeux d'Eugène récemment rafraichi par les pures et saintes émotions de la famille" (p.92). But very soon Eugène learns much more. He realizes that social advancement involves not only filial ingratitude in its worst form but also mercenary scheming (such as Vautrin's sinister plan to acquire one fifth of Victorine Taillefer's inheritance). The young man from the provinces also witnesses the decadence, infidelity, and corrupt unsocial behaviour that characterize the bourgeois class, and it seems natural that after seeing or taking part in their kind of activity Rastignac shows nothing but hatred towards this class.

We encounter a similar formal pattern in Of Human Bondage. Philip Carey's testing experiences take him through Germany, France, and back to England and, as Robin Lorin Calder points out, it is mainly as a result of these experiences that Philip acquires or reinforces three basic Maughamian values--Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Calder's

summary of Philip's experiences is worth quoting:

> Truth is analysed in Philip's year in Heidelberg, in his discussions with Cronshaw, in his philosophical searching, and in his revelation in the British Museum. Beauty is introduced in his period in Paris, and it becomes an integral part of his philosophy and pattern for living. Goodness is the central issue in the latter half of the novel, with a deliberate contrast between Mildred and the Athelny family. These three concepts are often intricately involved with each other, and ultimately Philip's view of life incorporates all three.[35]

As Susan Suleiman acknowledges, the structural scheme she has suggested for the "roman d'apprentissage" is indebted to the structural scheme Greimas developed for a folk tale, "La Quête de la peur."[36] That the structural pattern of that tale would fit the Novel of Personal Development is not surprising, for the apprenticeship novel, as has implicitly been shown, is indeed a version of the quest story. The use of several of the generative categories Greimas uses as "actants du récit" further strengthens this latter view.

In addition to the structural category of "le héros" which is quite similar to that in the tale, Greimas' other categories such as "destinateur," "opposant", "adjuvant," and others show deeper formal connections among various Novels of Development. Although in the folktale the "destinateur" i.e. ("un détenteur d'un savoir analogue sinon identique à celui que cherche le héros" and who "transmet ce qu'il sait et aide le héros à surmonter les épreuves"), can be the father, in the Apprenticeship Novel this is hardly ever the case. As a result, characters who are not even related to the protagonist often play the roles of "destinateurs." Examples of such characters who generally give positive guidance to and help the protagonists on the right path include: the old clergyman, Jarno and other members of the Society of the Tower in Wilhelm Meister; Rastignac's friend, Horace Bianchon, in Le Père Goriot; Joe and Wemmick in Great Expectations; and Mrs. William Carey, Cronshaw, and Mr. Athelny in Of Human Bondage. The category of "opposant" or "faux-destinateur" is, as its name implies, reserved for a character who could have been a "destinateur" but who actually plays another role, that of presenting views or creating situations which are inimical to the hero's development. This category will include characters such as the Old Meister, (Wilhelm's friend) Werner, and the actor, Melina, in Wilhelm

Meister, Vautrin in Le Père Goriot, Miss Havisham and Uncle Pumblechook in Great Expectations, and Philip's uncle the Reverend William Carey in Of Human Bondage.

In addition to those rather father-like characters who constitute the formal category of "destinateur" (for example, Magwitch), there is also the group Greimas refers to as "adjuvants," (i.e. characters who also help facilitate the hero's growth in a positive way.) Characters such as Laertes, the Old Harper, Mignon, and Friedrich in Goethe's novel; Herbert, and Biddy in Great Expectations; Old Goriot in Balzac's novel of that name, and a host of characters in Of Human Bondage--Philip's headmaster at prep. school, Mr Perkins, his many friends including Hayward, Clutton, Dr. South, and others belong to the group of "adjuvants."

A final formal quality that should be stressed is the effective use of irony in the apprenticeship novel. Double-edged irony almost becomes a distinguishing characteristic of that type of novel. Even though one can cite numerous examples from any of the novels discussed here, I shall use, as a representative example, an encounter between Pip and Uncle Pumblechook just after Pip learns of his expectations. Uncle Pumblechook who, prior to hearing news of the boy's potential social advance, had been nothing but a tormenting, stupid bully to Pip, suddenly becomes a grovelling "generous" and "caring" man towards him. Dickens' description of the scene in which Pip visits Pumblechook the morning after hearing of Pip's Expectations from Jaggers is replete with irony directed at both Pip and Pumblechook.

The old fop not only refers to Pip as "my dear good friend" but, in contrast to the Christmas dinner scene is ready to cater to Pip's slightest whim. Unfortunately, Pip cannot even discern the disgustingly fawning and mercenary nature of Pumblechook; our hero forms a new opinion of the old leech, and Dickens' irony is biting when he lets Pip conclude with "I remember feeling convinced that I had been much mistaken in [Pumblechook] and that he was a sensible practical good-hearted prime fellow."

The thematic ties among works belonging to the sub-genre of Novels of Personal Development are even more obvious than the structural connections. Themes such as the conflict between a rather sensitive young person (e.g. Wilhelm, Julien Sorel in Le Rouge et le noir, Pip) and a stubbornly antagonistic close relative (Old Meister, Old Sorel and Mrs. Gargery), that of love relationships (such as those between Wilhelm Meister and Marianne, Thérèse, and Natalie, Rastignac and the Countess de Restaud, the Baroness de Nucingen and Victorine Taillefer) are basic to this type of novel. There is, of course, the general theme of initiation and it is in fact through this theme that the author of the Novel of Personal Development often preaches his moral (and for the most part autobiographical) message, thus inevitably lending a didactic quality to this type of novel.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that because of the peculiar generic qualities of the Bildungsroman that we cannot really describe the West African novels I am dealing with as Bildungsromane. I have also demonstrated, however, that if we use the related though not identical sub-genre, the Novel of Personal development, we can see several structural and thematic relationships not only among certain seemingly unrelated European novels, but as we shall see in the succeeding chapters, among several African novels.

A. Notes

[1] Martin Swales, The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 57-8.

[2] Because German is not as popular in African literary scholarship as is either English or French, I have taken the liberty of translating the German quotations into English. Thus, Dilthey's statement reads roughly as follows: "In this way, Bildungsromane express the individualism of a culture which is limited to the spheres of private life. The emphasis of the state on bureaucracy and a military set up in German middle size and small states made writers of the younger generation regard the state as a foreign power. People were delighted and excited by the discovery of writers in the world of the individual and his personal development."

[3] W.H. Bruford, The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: Bildung from Humboldt to Thomas Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.V11. Bruford merely mentions "a lecture which Thomas Mann gave to a group of Republican students in Munich in 1923," without indicating any more information about this quote.

[4] François Jost, "La Tradition du Bildungsroman," Comparative Literature, XX1 (1969), 102. Jost, even though inclined to consider the Bildungsroman as a European (rather than a German) genre, still gives implicit assent to the Germany-Bildungsroman equation by suggesting that "Les Allemands semblent tenir le monopole du Bildungsroman."

[5] Jeffrey L. Sammons, "The Mystery of the Missing Bildungsroman, or: What Happened to Wilhelm Meister's Legacy?" Genre, X1V, 2 (Summer 1981), 232.

[6] Henry Hatfield, From the Magic Mountain: Mann's Later Masterpieces (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p.38. Continuing to show what he considers the Bildungsroman's typically Teutonic characteristics, Hatfield says that that kind of novel "is often formally deficient, unduly long, and meandering."

[7] Hans Wagner, Der Englische Bildungsroman bis in der Zeit des ersten Weltkrieges (Bern: Francke, 1951).

[8] G.B. Tennyson, "The Bildungsroman in Nineteenth-Century English Literature," Rosario P. Armato and John M. Spalek eds. Medieval Epic to the "Epic Theater" of Brecht (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), pp.135-46.

[9] Bernard N. Schilling, "Realism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Balzac, Dickens, and the Bildungsroman," in Actes/Proceedings of Vth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (Belgrade/Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1969), pp. 37-49.

[10] Jerome H. Buckley, Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974). To the best of my knowledge, this is the most recent and most thorough book on the British Bildungsroman and, although Sammons (note 5) does not see how Buckley's "appropriation of the term [Bildungsroman] has contributed methodologically to his analyses of the novels" Buckley discusses, there is no doubt that Buckley's text offers a serious challenge to scholars of the Bildungsroman-German culture persuasion.

[11] Jürgen Jacobs, Wilhelm Meister und seine Bruder: Untersuchungen zum deutschen

Bildungsroman (Munchen: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972).

[12] Swales, See Note 1.

[13] Marianne Hirsch, "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions," Genre X11, No.3 (1979), 293-311.

[14] Susan Suleiman, "La Structure d'apprentissage," Poétique, 37 (1979), 24-42.

[15] Swales, p.161.

[16] "Bildungsroman:" A Handbook to Literature, 3rd ed. (1976), p. 63.

[17] "Le Roman romantique en Europe," Dictionnaire universel des lettres, 1961, 752.

[18] Susanne Howe, Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930). Although some of Howe's findings will obviously look dated to the contemporary reader, she has the distinction of having pointed to the generic kinship between Wilhelm Meister and some of its non-German cousins in this relatively early period.

[19] Sammons, 232.

[20] Marianne Hirsch, 293-94.

[21] See Sammons (Note 4).

[22] Suleiman, 29-30.

[23] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre," Werke, 5th ed (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1962). All references will be to this edition which I shall abbreviate as Wilhelm Meister after long quotations. With Wilhelm Meister (as with the other European novels I shall be discussing in this chapter), I shall be using a non-definitive yet accessible and well-edited edition.

[24] [Goethe's hero] was young and new in the world.

[25] [Wilhelm's] vocation to the theatre was now clear to him. The high goal, which he saw raised before him, seemed nearer while he was advancing to it with Marianne's hand in his; and his comfortable prudence, he beheld in himself the embryo of a great actor; the future founder of that great national theatre, for which he heard so much and various sighing on every side.

[26] I am now giving proof...that I am serious in abandoning a trade for which I was not born.

[27] Charles Dickens, Great Expectations ed. R.D. McMaster (Toronto; London and New York: Macmillan, 1965). All references are to this edition.

[28] Honoré de Balzac, Le Père Goriot (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1972). All references are to this edition.

[29] W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981). All references are to this edition.

[30] He knew not that is the manner of all persons who attach importance to their inward

cultivation, altogether to neglect their outward circumstances. This had been Wilhelm's case. He now for the first time seemed to notice, that to work effectively, he stood in need of outward means.

[31] Roy Pascal, The German Novel (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1956), p.11.

[32] Suleiman, 31.

[33] Fate... is an excellent, but most expensive schoolmaster.... In all cases I would rather trust to the reason of a human tutor.

[34] Buckley, p. 51.

[35] Robert Lorin Calder, W.Somerset Maugham and the Quest for Freedom (London: Heinemann, 1972), p. 99.

[36] Suleiman, 31-34. See also A.J. Greimas, Du Sens (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

V. The Novel of Personal Development in Africa: The Beginning.

A brief write-up on the Cameroonian novelist, Mongo Beti, in the 1980 edition of the Dictionnaire des auteurs de langue française shows the kind of unflattering critical reception that some scholars have persisted in giving to some Beti works and especially to his second work of fiction, the novel, Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba. After referring to Beti's first work Ville cruelle[1] the editors of the Dictionnaire remark that Beti's "talent s'affirme dans les romans suivants: Mission terminée, Le Roi miraculé."[2]

If it were not for the fact that ever since its initial publication Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba[3] has been the subject of some very hostile and non-literary responses, one would have been surprised at the exclusion of this superbly-written piece and the inclusion of the artistically inferior Le Roi miraculé in a list that is supposed to give an indication of Beti's talents. The only surprise, however, is that such misleading information was still being promoted as late as 1980.

It is now common knowledge that, whereas Beti's second novel, Mission terminée (1957)[4] was received with great enthusiasm (it won the prix Sainte-Beuve in France), Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, published a year earlier, provoked horrified reactions even years after its first publication. Initially, it was banned in both Cameroon and France and, unlike works of equal merit by other francophone writers, it was only translated into English in 1971 (fifteen years after its first appearance). Because on the surface Mission terminée seems so different from Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba it is fairly easy to see why the hostile response to Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba easily changed to applause in Mission terminée.

Beti's ostensible targets in Mission terminée are those half-educated Africans who assume that, because of a partial exposure to European ways, they have a right to feel superior to their unlettered countrymen. Jean-Marie Medza, the hero of Mission terminée, is shown at the beginning of the novel to be a young high school student whose ignorance and insecurity make him become pompous and condescending when he goes home on holidays from the big city to his native village. In spite of having failed his baccalauréat

twice, Jean-Marie is treated with deference and respect by his relatives and friends in the village, who regard his education (albeit incomplete) as a credential of privilege. He is therefore given the prestigious task of retrieving the wife of one of his relatives--a woman who has run away from her matrimonial home in Jean-Marie's village to another village known as Kala, with a man from another ethnic group.

When Jean-Marie gets to Kala, he stays with an uncle who introduces him to the people as a most distinguished scholar, and this makes the Kalans regard their visitor with utmost respect. They look up to him for guidance, give him numerous gifts and even get him a wife; but by the end of the story the reader realizes that the young man who came to Kala was an essentially empty-headed, semi-literate student who has been taught a whole gamut of things by the very villagers he had initially thought of as being "uncivilized," "barbaric" and irresponsible. It is quite logical that, given the seemingly innocuous nature of the subject matter and the refined style in which it is rendered, Mission terminée should have received so much praise.

With Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, however, it is obvious that in spite of Beti's expert use of narrative technique, its thematic content was enough reason for it to be proscribed by the conservative political and literary establishments. Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba deals with the unsuccessful attempts of le père Drumont (a French missionary in Africa for twenty years) at converting the "pagan natives" to Christianity. Events in the novel are mainly centred on the lives of the priest and his young acolyte, Denis, who presents everything to the reader through the medium of his diary.

At the start of the novel, le père Drumont, Denis, and the priest's cook, Zacharie, leave Bomba, the regional headquarters of the Catholic mission, to win back the Tala people, "the lost sheep," who have rebelled against Christianity. In the course of this journey, the main protagonists (Drumont and Denis) acquire a considerable amount of experience. First of all, Father Drumont and Denis gradually become aware of the people's scepticism towards the Christian religion; Denis also starts seeing and understanding the

connivance between the spiritual and secular colonialists; but the most painful lesson (especially for Drumont) occurs when, on their return to Bomba, they find to their horror that the "sixa"--an institution Drumont has created apparently for the moral upbringing of Christian brides-to-be--had been used as a brothel and as a centre for the propagation of venereal diseases by certain brethren of the mission. The Reverend Father finally abandons these "godless" people and goes back to Europe. For his part, the young acolyte, knowing the brutality that lies in store for him if, like other young Africans, he is conscripted into a labour gang, decides to escape to the big city and do the less brutal even if equally degrading task of working for a Greek merchant.

It is understandable therefore that, because of the predominant anti-clerical and anti-colonial themes in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, most critics who have considered that work have appropriately concerned themselves above all with those obvious themes and to a lesser extent with elucidating Beti's narrative skills (especially his use of irony).[5] It is an odd fact, however, that critical commentary on Denis, with very few exceptions, has been limited only to the ingenious way Beti uses him as a narrative vehicle or perspective. Aside from attributing Beti's successful use of narrative technique to his skillful manipulation of Denis' "innocence," scholars usually say nothing more about the narrator.

No one will deny that Beti does capitalize on the narrator's naiveté. Being extremely conscious of his craft, Beti realizes that in treating topical issues such as the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized (which invariably means the relationship between one race and another), and the role of the church in a colonized society, he risks being charged by hostile critics with either distorting or eschewing reality. He also understands that if he were to present these inflammatory subjects through the eyes of an adult, omniscient narrator, he might make himself more vulnerable to accusations of "authorial intrusion," "preaching" and so forth, which would make it easy for such critics to label his work a tract rather than a novel. It is disputable however to assume (as most critics have done) that the only aspect of Denis' character worth examining is his stylistic function

within the novel. I want to argue in this section that, as one of the protagonists in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Denis deserves more critical attention than that which has normally been devoted to him. A focus on the acolyte's character will also make the apprenticeship qualities of that Beti novel more noticeable. In addition, it should be pointed out that a recent article published by Mongo Beti himself on his first mature novel makes the need for a more detailed evaluation of the boy-narrator more obvious and more urgent.

In the article which Beti pointedly captioned "Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba Expliqué!.."[6] because he wanted it to be a corrective rejoinder to what he considers deliberate falsehoods on the part of some scholars, especially in their interpretation of Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, the novelist deals among other things with some autobiographical information. He mentions, for example, the rather peculiar and even suspicious circumstances surrounding his father's death in 1939, the role of religion in his personal life, and the attitude of his people (as he knew it) towards the Christian missionary.

What is of particular importance to us, however, is Beti's reference to certain writers whose influence left a profound mark on him. According to Beti, he first arrived in France in 1951, "au beau milieu de la vogue [Richard] Wrightienne." Further on in the article Beti refers to "les oeuvres de Richard Wright [qui] furent moins des romans que la lanterne magique jetant le Nouveau Monde des Noirs en pâture à l'avidité d'un petit africain à peine debarqué de sa brousse coloniale." The novelist then mentions Mark Twain whom he describes as "l'écrivain qui, avec des artistes noirs, musiciens, chanteurs et romanciers, offre l'expression à la fois spontanée, la plus humaine et la plus poignante du phénomène americain." Finally, Beti (who incidentally is a classical scholar) makes the following comparison between the works of the two American writers referred to and some ancient classical writers:

> ...à côté de Richard wright, de Mark Twain et de bien d'autres encore, j'avoue qu'Eschyle, Aristophane, Cicéron, Tive-Live, Plaute et tutti quanti me parurent soudain bien pales, bien lointains, si déliquescents.[7]

It is significant but not entirely surprising that, according to Beti, two of the most important influences in his literary life were Richard Wright and Mark Twain--two writers who will always be remembered for the way they have sensitized generations of readers to the special problems of adolescents, especially as they go through the rites of passage leading to adulthood. Moreover, Beti's acknowledgement in this regard is important for two reasons. First, it partly explains the preponderance of young people as major and credible characters in Beti's oeuvre. Indeed Beti's portrayal of characters such as Banda in Ville cruelle, Denis in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Jean-Marie in Mission terminée, the eponymous Perpétue, and Mor-Zamba in Remember Ruben (1974) demonstrates the importance he attaches to the life of a young person as a literary theme. Second, it alerts the reader to the importance of the subject of adolescent development in West African prose; indeed, if one focuses on the subject, it becomes clear that a) with the publication of his first two novels Beti had started, together with his compatriot and contemporary, Ferdinand Oyono (who had written Une Vie de boy, a novel rather similar to Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba in 1956), a West African version of the Novel of Personal Development, and b) that there are closer thematic and structural connections not only between the first two Beti novels and Une Vie de boy but even between Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Mission terminée--two Beti novels which both critics and censors often regard as being radically different.

Before offering reasons for my claim that these early Cameroonian novels and other West African texts such as Koné's Les Frasques d'Ebinto, Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and others are written in the tradition of the apprenticeship novel, one should briefly reiterate at least two key elements, in the absence of which it would be impossible to speak of this sub-genre. It should be remembered that, reduced to its lowest common denominator, the structural pattern of the Novel of Personal Development depicts a version of the quest story, and it usually involves the protagonist's movement from a state of ignorance to a state of awareness or knowledge by means of certain experiences or

"tests" in life. The passage from adolescence to adulthood and the transformation of experiences gained during this transition period into something useful for future adult life are what constitute the structural framework of the apprenticeship novel. Linked to this formal pattern is a basic thematic movement--the hero moves from being a "self-centred" individual to becoming a "society-centred" person.[8]

As was previously indicated, the thematic and formal connections between Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Oyono's Une Vie de boy[9] are fairly conspicuous; both authors use their native Cameroon as the setting for their respective novels and they also allow adolescent-narrators to recount by means of the diary form the varied experiences of these narrators. It is also remarkable that because of Cameroon's peculiar colonial history, these writers should have launched such sustained but artistically well-constructed attacks on various levels of the French colonial system. As I shall demonstrate, what is even more remarkable, however, is the manner in which these two novels--which certainly rank among the earliest aesthetically-successful novels from Africa--demonstrate the generic qualities of the "roman d'apprentissage" without showing any conscious imitation of the European originators of that literary category. I shall start, however, by giving a brief outline of the Oyono novel since I have already made summaries of the two Beti texts.

The narrator-hero in Une Vie de boy[9] is an adolescent, Toundi, who is forced to flee from home primarily because of his authoritarian and sadistic father, and also because of his own gluttony. On the day of his circumcision, Toundi runs away (to escape punishment from his father) to the Head of the Catholic mission of the imaginary town of Dangan, le père Gilbert. The priest, who has often tried to attract Toundi and other young children with sweets in his attempts to convert them to Christianity, readily gives the boy a new home. During his short stay with the priests, Toundi, like Denis, shows great devotion to and admiration for Father Gilbert to whom, he claims, he owes everything in life. But father Gilbert soon dies and Toundi now has to work as a houseboy for the regional commandant, M. Decazy. Initially, the commandant and his wife (who has just arrived in

Africa for the first time) treat Toundi with some condescending compassion. As the novel progresses, however, the boy witnesses more and more of the corruption, hypocrisy, brutality, and deceit that characterize colonialism, and because of his knowledge, the colonial oppressors finally get rid of him in a most inhumane and savage manner. They trump up robbery charges against him, and throw him in jail where he is cudgelled, tortured and forced to work until he collapses. He is taken to hospital under the pretext of seeking medical attention for him but there again he is subject to more degradation. Toundi escapes from the hospital and even from Cameroon, but he is unable to survive the brutal beatings he had suffered in prison and he finally dies in Spanish Guinea. Just before his death, however, Toundi is able to give his diary (where he had written about his life as a houseboy) to one of his countrymen. It is this diary we read as Une Vie de boy. The issue that should be addressed now centres on why we should classify this work and the Beti texts as Novels of Personal Development.

Denis' Mission to Tala.

In much the same way as Jean-Marie in Mission terminée can be said to have gone on a "mission to Kala" to learn some basic facts of life from the Kala people (the major reason why that novel's title is often translated as Mission to Kala instead of the literal Mission Terminated or Accomplished), so can it be said that Denis has gone on a quest for education or enlightenment from the Tala people. In fact, the title Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba could easily have been substituted in translation by Mission to Tala, for this novel focuses equally on Drumont's eye-opening mission to Tala as well as on the young Denis' mission of education on human relationships. In order to demonstrate the validity of these statements and also to indicate how, by the end of Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba the young protagonist, in true apprenticeship manner, not only sheds those traits of his personality that made him self-centred but indeed acquires habits that make him more society-centred, let us refer to some key episodes in the novel that clearly demonstrate the various

processes of Denis' development.

At the beginning of Le Pauvre christ de Bomba we notice that Denis, like other apprentice-heroes, is virtually an orphan. Because his only living parent, his father, has abandoned him at Father Drumont's, Denis easily mistakes Drumont's "benevolence" for paternal love. This leads the boy to direct a tremendous amount of infatuation (which he misinterprets as love) towards Drumont. It is necessary to stress this relationship between Denis and his mentor because, perhaps more than the boy's "innocence" (which critics have often emphasized), it is this "love" for Drumont which is largely responsible for Denis' display of naiveté and ignorance before and during most of the mission to Tala. This, of course, is not to suggest that all of Denis' actions take place as a result of his infatuation with Drumont. Some of his actions are unquestionably due to a downright childish appreciation of things; for instance, in one episode he assumes that the noise coming from Zacharie's room is due to the cook's diarrhea when, in actual fact, Zacharie is enjoying an epic, romping sexual episode with a "sixa" woman. The point that must be underlined however is that whether Denis' actions come about as a result of his being a youth or because of his attachment to Drumont, some of the practical knowledge the acolyte-narrator gains during the tour of Tala country helps determine the thematic direction taken and the stylistic (or even generic) structure that emerges in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba.

Beti's portrayal of Denis as a character who, in most sections of the novel, is ignorant of the ways of the world, is very well done. The novelist demonstrates that from the beginning and right on to nearly the very end of the novel Denis' infatuation with Drumont blinds him to the realities of his society. For instance, Denis and Drumont are about the only people who do not know that Drumont's "desertion" of the Tala people has actually been more of a blessing than a curse for these people. The acolyte also disapproves of the priest's well-deserved nickname "le malin" even though the people are quite justified in calling him that name because of his crafty actions. Denis not only shows

disdain for people such as the young man whose fiancée has apparently been impounded by the church and who thus questions the Reverend Father about the legitimacy of such an action, he is also quite contemptous of the Tala people in general because they reject Drumont's brand of religion:

> Il [Drumont] ne les a laissés à l'abandon que parce qu'il croyait qu'ils en tireraient profit: il leur manquerait; ils en seraient touchés; ils rentreraient en eux-mêmes et ils s'efforceraient de s'améliorer et de revenir à la foi vraie. Oh! le stratagème n'a visiblement pas réussi! Comment en aurait-il été autrement dans ce pays des Tala, ce royaume de Satan, ce vrai Sodome et Gomorrhe.
>
> P.C.B, p. 23

Furthermore, because of Denis' narrow attachment to the Reverend Father Superior (R.P.S.), he often ratifies some of the most outrageous actions taken by his mentor. For instance, because of Denis "love" for the R.P.S. he gives enthusiastic support to the priest's uncharitable rejection of the old, penniless and toothless Christian woman who could not pay her church dues; the boy supports Drumont even though his better instincts seem to suggest that he would rather have supported the old woman. Another episode that shows the dangerous extent of the narrator's ignorance, especially in the early sections of the novel, is the one dealing with the death of a villager, Joseph Garba. On that occasion, Drumont is called to offer aid to Garba who has been impaled upon by a tree; even though the man of God knows that he has been summoned to give much-needed physical assistance to the dying man, the spiritual father goes through a ridiculous (one might even say useless) ritual of demanding confession from the man. Joseph Garba dies and, for this, the priest gets the warmest commendation from Denis:

> J'étais heureux en songeant que cet événement les remettrait peut-être dans le droit chemin. Et peut-être, si les gens s'amendaient, le R.P.S. ne renoncerait à ce beau pays.
>
> P.C.B, p. 42

Denis expresses similar satisfaction and hope when he learns that the colonial administration will forcibly throw people out of their homes and conscript them for forced labour; the people will not only learn their lesson about God, but will go back to the man our narrator loves so well, le père Drumont. The boy's unshaken belief in Drumont's

allegedly good intentions and actions let Denis believe that "le R.P.S.... était arrivé dans ce pays pour nous annoncer la bonne nouvelle, d'une façon désinteressée..." and that "il n'avait pas pensé à lui, il n'a pensé qu'à nous, de même que le Christ s'est oublié pour ne penser qu'aux hommes" (p.68). Thus the boy almost leaps for joy when the church leader launches a totally unjustified attack on some villagers who are celebrating on a Friday evening, and more so when he humiliates the psychologically-astute even if wily traditional healer, Sanga Boto.

But by the end of the novel we notice that Denis' relationship with Father Drumont has changed completely. A statement he makes about his overall attitude towards the Tala people perhaps best sums up the kind of change the narrator has undergone:

> Ouais, je pense à la sévérité avec laquelle je jugeais les Tala au cours de quinze jours qu'a duré notre tournée, je me rappelle que je les considerais même comme des monstres. Comme j'étais injuste. Ou plutôt comme j'étais naif.
> P.C.B, p.245

This statement, of course, stands in direct contrast to some of the earlier ones but especially to the one in which he had described Tala land as Sodom and Gomorrah. More significantly, one notices that the kind of self-illumination that Denis shows in this latter episode is quite typical of his behaviour as the novel draws to a close. Unlike on previous occasions when he lent support to even the most vicious actions undertaken by his boss, upon their return to Bomba, Denis constantly distances himself from the father's basically unchristian conduct. A few episodes will serve as examples. When the whole truth of the brothel-like nature of the "sixa" is revealed, the R.P.S. pretends to probe into the root cause of all that had gone wrong in this supposedly religious household. What he ends up doing however is summoning a few "sixa" women and, while feigning to seek the truth, he actually seems to be getting some vicarious satisfaction from the offensive details of exploitation the women have gone through. When these women, who obviously have been more sinned against than sinning, refuse to give any more of this degrading information, the Father orders his sexually-perverted assistant cook, Anatole, to whip the women--something which Anatole does with sadistic pleasure. Contrary to previous

occasions when Denis would have subscribed to his master's actions, he demonstrates quite unequivocally now that his sympathies and empathy are rightly with the "sixa" women:

> Le cuisinier adjoint, brandissant sa chicote, a cherché la bonne position; il l'a trouvée et il a levé son rotin très haut avant de l'abattre sur les fesses de Marguerite, avec un bruit sec et sonore, le même bruit que fait sur le sol quand il n'a plu, une mangue tombant de très haut. Marguerite est restée impassible: ni un geste, ni une plainte. Maintenant, Anatole frappait avec précipitation, toujours avec la même vigeur qu'au premier coup; et chaque fois mes yeux se fermaient et je tressaillais comme si c'était moi qu'on avait frappé ainsi.
>
> P.C.B, p.232

Denis' description here should remind us of the way he describes his feelings earlier on when the same beastly Anatole (again on Drumont's orders) mercilessly thrashes another "sixa" woman, Catherine. The young man indicates that, unlike Father Drumont who aggravates the woman's injury by calling her names, the whipping incident "me faisait mal du coeur et mes yeux se sont embués de larmes."

The development of the narrator's perception is shown in its final stage in Bomba just before he goes to the big city. He now openly doubts the efficacy of the Christian religion:

> Moi aussi, je commence à me demander si la religion chrétienne convient vraiment aux Noirs, si elle est bien faite à notre mesure. Je croyais fermement, puisque Jesus-Christ a dit à ses apôtres: "Allez et annoncez la bonne nouvelle aux peuples de la terre.... " Mais maintenant je ne sais plus.
>
> P.C.B, p. 245.

The boy also refuses to join Anatole in stupidly heaping blame on the "sixa" women who have only been victims of sexual and other forms of abuse. Finally, having witnessed a good portion of spiritual and secular colonialism, he decides to go to the big town where, it is implied, his view of the world and people will be more tolerant, charitable, and humane.

Denis becomes this changed individual, not as a result of any formal training but witnesses or participates in during the trip to Tala land. Led by various characters such as Zacharie, Catherine, and some Tala people, Denis is gradually made to understand that love for our fellow human beings or even for Jesus Christ ultimately demands a realistic, compassionate and tolerant attitude toward people.

Notwithstanding some of his unquestionably irresponsible actions Zacharie, the cook, serves as "destinateur" for Denis in the novel. It is he who keeps telling the boy to "ouvre donc les yeux et regarde autour de toi," almost always showing Denis the right path. For instance, it is Zacharie who signals at the outset that the Tala people do not appreciate Drumont's mission and that they have not missed him (as Drumont arrogantly assumes). Zacharie is also the one who makes it quite clear to Drumont and Denis that man shall not live by faith alone. He also suggests to Drumont that the priest is being arrogant, stupid, and even blasphemous by enticing the Talans to believe that he is the "Good Shepherd." More importantly, however, it is Zacharie (more than any other character) who leads Denis to an understanding of the collusion between the church and the state during the colonial period. The cook also appropriately condemns the Reverend Father when, in a typically autocratic manner, he destroys a Friday evening entertainment by some non-Christian villagers. True to his shrewd nature, Zacharie refuses to have anything to do with such actions.

Zacharie also makes le père Drumont (and Denis) realize that Africans did not first hear of God from Europeans and he again points out to Drumont that by believing that Sanga Boto's body has been taken over by the devil, the priest is just as superstitious as the "pagans" he condemns. Eustace Palmer's description of Zacharie as the guardian and partial donor of most of the knowledge Denis acquires is apt:

> He is used by Mongo Beti as a kind of permanent check to the narrator's naivety and the father's illusions about his mission. The author needs Zacharia on this journey to act as a useful corrective and to be a spokesman for the radical African point of view, and he is able to play this role effectively, not just because he is intelligent, but because he is a perceptive man of the world who knows his people and is proud of them.[16]

The role of "faux-destinateur" or "opposant" is played by characters such as "le pauvre Christ" Drumont himself, le père le Guen (the other priest in the mission), and some of the catechists --characters who clearly create situations that are inimical to the boy's development. In contrast to these characters who nearly smother Denis' emotional and mental growth are those characters who, like Zacharie, help Denis develop in a positive

way. To this group of "adjuvants" belong the majority of the Tala people and the "sixa" women.

There are many instances, of course, in which the Talans give lessons on social intercourse to Denis: it may take the form of "une sourde rumeur" from the female members of the congregation as they show disapproval for the ejection of another female member whose baby commits the "sin" of crying in church, or it may be the views of people such as those in Timbo who see the link between the father and the other colonialists and whose opinions are reported by a catechist as follows:

> Mon père, ils disent qu'un prêtre, ce n'est pas meilleur qu'un marchand grec ou tout autre colon. Ils disent que ce qui vous préoccupe tous, c'est l'argent, un point c'est tout: vous n'êtes pas sincères, vous leur cachez des choses, vous ne leur enseignez rien.
>
> P.C.B, p. 202.

Another catechist in Akamba, while answering one of Drumont's questions, equates the power of Sanga Boto's followers with those of the church's adherents. Then there is Catherine, Zacharie's lover in the "sixa" who, for a brief while, becomes Denis' sexual playmate and teacher. She not only initiates the boy into the world of sex and human sexuality, she indeed helps him understand that love for any religion (or its representative) devoid of feelings for people in general is a chimera promoted by oppressors. She brings back the basic humanity which had nearly been stifled in the young boy and it therefore seems quite in place that, largely as a result of the varied forms of "education" he acquires on the tour, Denis notices the following change in himself:

> On dirait que je ne suis plus le même. On dirait qu'un étranger a pénétré en moi, qu'il s'y installe lentement, qu'il se substitue peu à peu à moi-même.... En ce moment, ce n'est plus la tournée qui me fait l'impression d'un cauchemar, mais plutôt toute la partie de ma vie antérieure à cette tournée, qui perd consistance, s'évapore en nuée de rêve comme au sortir d'un sommeil.... Exactement comme si je me reveillais d'un long sommeil, sans trop savoir à quoi j'emploierais ma nouvelle journée.
>
> P.C.B, p. 192.

Growing up Under the Shadow of the Colonial administration

Just as with Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, critics of Oyono's Une Vie de boy have almost always focused their attention on the anti-colonial and anti-apostolistic themes and on Oyono's satiric style. Scholars have also been unanimous in their identification of Toundi's naive and artless reporting as the most effective method Oyono uses to give a rather detached disapprobation of colonialism. But this approach also shows that very few critics have tried to make any generic connections between Une Vie de boy and the two early Beti novels. In the remaining sections of this chapter it will be demonstrated that because they have complementary, even if seemingly different referential worlds, and because they also share the same generic characteristics, it can be said that Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Une Vie de boy and Mission terminée are not only similar in superficial ways, they also belong to the sub-genre. I also hope to show that attention to genre provides a key to proper aesthetic assessment.

Just as Beti makes the point in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba that, as a result of Denis' close relationship with Drumont and the church, he eventually gains some practical knowledge which enables him to grow into a wiser young man, so is it emphasized in the other two novels that because of each narrator's closeness to the two other most powerful institutions under colonialism--the civil administration and the school system--they end up having a greater understanding of the world in which they live.

The contrast between Toundi's final statement in Spanish Guinea and his comments just after he had moved into the Catholic mission serve as excellent clues for the reading of Une Vie de boy as a novel dealing with the growth and mental development of an adolescent. Going back to the beginning of the diegetic time one notices that when Toundi is accepted by le père Gilbert, the boy receives from the priest a kind of parental warmth he had never received from his real father. This affection makes the boy develop great love and admiration for his guardian as is shown in his rhetoric when he describes their relationship:

> Je dois ce que je suis devenu au père Gilbert. Je l'aime beaucoup mon bienfaiteur. C'est un homme gai, qui lorsque j'étais petit, me considerait comme un petit animal familier. Le père Gilbert m'a connu comme un ver, il m'a appris à lire et à écrire.... Rien ne vaut cette richesse, bien que je sache maintenant ce que c'est d'être mal habillé.
>
> Boy, p. 24

Toundi has every right to be grateful to his benefactor who, as he points out, does many good things for him in spite of the occasional brutality; but, in reading between the lines of this speech and also in looking at Toundi's reaction to Gilbert's death and burial, one gets the feeling that this is not mere gratitude; it is, as with Denis and Drumont, a case of misplaced love and trust. Because of le père Gilbert's father-like attitude towards Toundi, the boy puts tremendous trust in him and in some of the other colonialists such as the commandant.

By the end of the story, however, we see that the dying Toundi has certainly become wiser. In fact he is hopeful that other African youths will profit from his experiences and not make similar mistakes.

> Mon frère, commença-t-il, mon frère, que sommes-nous? Que sont tous les nègres qu'on dit français?.... Tu vois mon frère, continuat-il, je suis fichu.... Ils m'ont eu....
>
> Boy, pp. 12-13

The young man who makes these comments on his death bed is no longer the ever-trusting admirer of the colonialists; he now realizes that the trust, respect, admiration and even affection he showed towards his masters were never reciprocal and that the whole idea of being considered a black Frenchman is nothing but a sham. Although Toundi dies we are left with the assurance that he is now so conscious of other people around him that he sees the value of educating his people by his own errors. If, in spite of the protagonist's death, Une Vie de boy can be said to have a positive ending, it is because of Toundi's rather selfless desire to educate and warn other Africans against thinking that being close to the colonialists will make them become more acceptable Frenchmen.

Toundi's process of education is long and painful. In the beginning it is his naive faith and confidence in his colonial overlords that are stressed, most times with biting

irony. For instance, when Toundi comes back from the two week tour with father Gilbert he articulates his desire to be like the colonialists by saying "j'allais connaître la ville et les blancs, et vivre comme eux." We know, of course, that Toundi gets to know the world of the colonialists but he does not live long enough to live like them; even if he had lived longer he probably would not have wanted to live like them. The boy's ignorance of the depraved colonial world which he admires is stressed in several other ways. We see this for example when Toundi (who thinks that as a houseboy to the commandant he is now "le roi des chiens") has his first conversation with M.Decazy:

> Après m'avoir longuement observé mon nouveau maître me demanda à brûle-pour point si j'étais un voleur.
> ---Non, commandant, répondis-je.
> ---Pourquoi n'es-tu pas un voleur?
> ---Parceque je ne veux pas aller en enfer.
> ---Comment est-ce l'enfer?
> ---Ben, c'est des flammes, les serpents et Satan avec des cornes.... J'ai une image de l'enfer dans mon livre de prières....
> Je...peux la montrer.
>
> Boy, p.33

Toundi's description of hell shows the childish nature of his mind, but the flow of the prose and his decision to go and show the picture of hell in his prayer book suggest that he now looks upon his new master with the same kind of intimacy that he used to regard le père Gilbert. One can also infer that he is going to trust the commandant as he trusted Gilbert and it is in this naiveté that Toundi's uncritical trust lies.

It is due to his inexperience that Toundi cannot understand why Sophie, the girl friend of the white engineer, would want to empty her boy friend's pockets and then escape to her home village when, after all, according to the narrator's reasoning, the engineer "est pourtant le plus beau de tous les blancs de Dangan." He obviously does not understand, as Sophie does, that the relationship between the two sex mates has nothing to do with either love or beauty. Toundi's ignorance of the colonial world (which actually makes him confer so much dignity and even superiority on the colonialists), is also responsible for his profound excitement on both the announcement and actual arrival of commandant Decazy's wife from France, his total disgust with Mme. Decazy when she

starts having an affair with M. Moureau (the prison director), and his refusal to flee even after he has been advised to do so by Kalisia, the chamber maid.

But as Toundi continues to live close to the colonial administration, he is gradually able to acquire more and more knowledge about the colonialists, thereby leading to the shattering of all the illusions he used to have. Although even at the priests' household Toundi had started learning about brutality from the "holy" people, it is when he goes to work for the commandant that he is able to witness first hand the moral and other forms of degeneracy of the world he held in such high esteem--the colonial world.

As a result of his association with the Decazys and other whites Toundi gradually comprehends that those he had been regarding as substitute parents and role models are far from the shining examples he had thought them to be. M. Decazy is not only unduly violent towards Toundi, he subscribes to the reign of terror carried out by other colonialists such as the ruthless police commissioner, nicknamed "Gosier-d'Oiseau," who terrorizes the indigenous population by launching midnight "raids" upon them, and the Greek sadist-businessman, Janopoulos, "[qui] n'aime pas les indigènes [et qui] a la manie de lancer sur eux son énorme chien-loup."

But Toundi's real initiation starts when he discovers that his boss is uncircumcised. He realizes that this man he had initially labelled "le roi" and "souche d'acajou" would not even be considered a man in his society. No wonder he comments that "cette découverte m'a beaucoup soulagé. Cela a tué quèlque chose en moi.... Je sens que le commandant ne me fais plus peur" (p. 45). Toundi also gets to see the indignities the majority of the people have to endure especially in the light of the comforts the settlers enjoy. He notices that the "église Saint-Pierre de Dangan" is a hub of racism where whites have superior and comfortable seats while their black brethren in Christ (after scrambling through the only door reserved for them), have to squat on wooden trunks. The blacks, unlike their white bosses, are constantly under the watchful eyes of brutal catechists who are always prepared to whack any of them guilty of inattentiveness. The boy gets to know of the

hypocrisy and shamelessness that characterize people such as the agricultural engineer who merely uses the black woman, Sophie, as an instrument for quenching his sexual desires. Toundi is witness likewise to the boring conversations that take place among the settlers; but while one can continue enumerating the various ways in which the narrator becomes enlightened it will suffice if reference is now made to the final incidents that remove whatever blinkers Toundi may have had over his mind's eyes about the true nature of the colonialists in his society. When the innocent raconteur, who is unwittingly led into the secret adulterous affairs of his boss's wife and M. Moureau, commits the unpardonable blunder of allowing his employers to realize that he knows and does not approve of their dirty secret life, he is destroyed after an unspeakable travesty of justice labelled "investigation."

In order to get to the state of awareness we find Toundi in at the end of the story time, it is necessary to have in addition to the structural category of "opposants" which I have been discussing, the other structural categories such as the "adjuvants." A perfect example of a character belonging to this group is Mengueme, chief of the Yanyans. Mengueme is very much unlike his other counterpart, Akoma, the idiotic chief of the Sos. Because of his obsequiousness to the colonial administration Akoma had been paid back with a short visit to France; as a consequence, he adopts a ridiculously ostentatious pose, and does nothing but strut around with ring-filled fingers pretending to be what he is not. Mengueme on the other hand is shown to be a conscientious chief--indeed a real man of the people as Toundi's description of him shows:

> Mengueme est le chef des Yanyans. Il est très estimé de son peuple. Il est le seul ancien qui ait survécu à sa génération. Il met son costume de chef quand il vient voir le commandant et s'en débarrasse aussitôt la ville européene franchie.... Mengueme n'a pas voyagé. Sa sagesse n'a pas besoin de voyages. C'est un ancien.
>
> Boy, p. 56

Other characters in this category include the worldly-wise Kalisia and the cook who constantly caution Toundi to be less trustful of his bosses.

Jean-Marie's Mission to Kala.

Before examining Mission terminée as one of the three earliest African versions of novels belonging to the apprenticeship and not to the picaresque tradition as some critics have suggested,[11] it is essential to point out some basic distinctions between the apprenticeship novel and other related sub-genres such as the picaresque and confessional novels. In the words of Marianne Hirsch:

> One might distinguish among the picaresque hero who is a social outcast, the Bildungsheld who is a representative member of society, and the protagonist of the confessional novel who is a spiritual outsider. Structurally, the picaresque novel is composed of a number of episodes loosely strung together; the novel of formation represents a progression of connected events leading up to a definite denouement; the confessional novel is a retrospective search for a pattern that is often not chronological. The picaresque novel stresses the material side of life and concentrates on actions and adventures, in particular; the novel of formation stresses actions and thoughts equally, attempting to portray a total personality; the confessional novel focuses on thoughts and reflections alone. While the picaresque novel is turned outward toward society and the confessional novel is turned inward toward consciousness, the novel of formation maintains a peculiar balance between the social and explores their interaction. In contrast to both these forms the novel of formation is founded on progress and the coherence of self-hood.[12]

Although Jean-Marie has been somewhat cut off from the traditions of his people, there is no way we can say that, in the manner of picaresque heroes such as Lazarillo, Jack Wilton, Moll Flanders, and Jagua Nana, he is a social outcast. He is very much a part of his society. It is also obvious that the highly introvertive nature of the confessional novel is absent in Mission terminée. But, in order to see how this particular representation of Jean-Marie and other aspects of Mission terminée qualify that novel as a "roman d'apprentissage" we should look at the text itself.

From the outset, Beti sets the scene for us to see how, because of Jean- Marie's exposure to western education, he is essentially ignorant of the ways of his people. From the moment Jean-Marie, prodded on by some of his relatives and fellow villagers, is made to believe that (as a result of his partial literacy) he is capable of doing such adult and decidedly mature things as arguing convincingly enough for the return of his cousin's estranged wife, he not only starts believing in his own preeminence but also in the

superiority of his "education" and of his city lifestyle over those of his illiterate "bush" countrymen. And it is this desire to convey the aura of intellectual and social sophistication that leads the narrator to adopt such a lofty and haughty tone at the beginning. For example, as he cycles his way to Kala he starts having delusions of himself as a great conqueror:

> De temps en temps, je m'arrêtais et, un pied touchant à peine la chaussée pendant que l'autre restait posé sur l'étrier, je contemplais l'immense panorama ouvert à mes futurs exploits, lequel immense panorama se réduisait, pour sa plus grande partie, à la minable perspective des pieds des arbres qui bordaient la route, l'oppressaient littéralement. Et puis cet étrange nom que je portais, Medza.... En ajoutant une toute petite syllable supplémentaire, cela serait un nom de conquistadore: Medzaro!....comme Pizzaro ou presque....
>
> Mission, p. 36.

It is views such as these that define Jean-Marie's behaviour during the initial stages of his visit to Kala. He is rather disappointed that his arrival in Kala is not heralded by any fanfare and he thus proceeds to comment quite condescendingly and ignorantly on the "rude sauvagerie" of what is apparently a well-organized sport in the village. Jean-Marie's patronizing attitude is further crystallized when he realizes that, like some of the folks in his home village, the Kalans are more than willing to bestow honour and respect upon him because of his "education."

The young man is surprised that his cousin, Zambo, should decide to join him in his bid to get back Niam's wife, when Jean-Marie, already considering himself as an African Agamemnon, is convinced that he would do what the classical Agamemnon could not do, i.e. retrieve his African "Helen" single-handedly. It is also Jean-Marie's "superior" position that leads him to make disparaging comments about the assiko dance which, as some of his later comments show, he knows very little about. Very soon, however, we realize that, contrary to what Jean-Marie thinks, it is he and not the villagers who is badly in need of education. This point is more forcefully brought out as the visiting narrator continues his visit to Kala.

We get a sample of the process of Jean-Marie's education (as distinct from mere literacy) when, on the second day of his stay in Kala, he and Zambo visit the father of the

narrator's "Helen." The old man, who had been described earlier as being quite sharp, obviously sees through Jean-Marie's immaturity and ignorance; no wonder that upon the arrival of the two young men, "il paraissait très bien à son aise" and, according to the narrator, "[il] ne m'accorda qu'une oeillade." The most important thing that happens during this meeting, however, is the short but basic lesson especially on matrimonial relations that the old man gives to both young men, but especially to Jean-Marie. Instead of making a decision for his absent daughter (as even the literate and supposedly educated Jean-Marie expects) Niam's father-in-law says:

> Dans le fond fiston, ce n'est pas vraiment moi que cette histoire concerne, mais ma fille. Elle est absente en ce moment; elle reviendra certainement un de ces jours. C'est avec elle que tu discuteras. Moi, il y a longtemps que je l'ai donnée en mariage, et sans arrière- pensée. A elle, ce coup-ci, de savoir si elle retourne chez son mari ou si elle ne retourne pas.
>
> Mission, pp. 65-6.

It is no exaggeration to suggest that this speech (which certainly elaborates upon the old man's earlier "Ma fille est assez agée pour savoir ce qu'elle veut et surtout ce qu'elle ne veut plus") and the ensuing argument between Zambo and the old man introduce Jean-Marie to the notion of freedom from parental manipulation.

One should perhaps dwell on this question of a youth's independence from parental domination because, as at least one critic has observed, the theme of the son rebelling against the father is of paramount importance in Mission terminée. This theme not only suggests reasons for at least part of Jean-Marie's ignorance but also helps facilitate the hero's process of education. All evidence in the novel suggests that up to the time Jean-Marie goes to Kala, his educational and emotional growth had been smothered. True, he had been successful in all but one of his secondary school examinations, but the point is also made that he has been made more into a literate fool by an uneducating school than into an educated individual, and that before his Kala trip his emotional life had been non-existent. Jean-Marie's father is shown to be largely responsible for the boy's ignorance in almost everything except, in an almost Gradgrindian way, the "facts" the boy was supposed to have gobbled in school. Out of fear that Jean-Marie might end up being

an irresponsible lout like his elder brother, the older Medza puts a blind emphasis on the boy's acquisition of book knowledge and in the process of doing this he impedes Jean-Marie's normal pattern of development.

Thus, Jean-Marie is not only shocked to learn that his uncle Mama allows Zambo (who is only a few years older than Jean-Marie himself) to bring his girl friend home, he is genuinely amazed that both his uncle and Zambo banter with one another the way they do--actions that probably would have earned Jean-Marie some severe lashing from his father. But Jean-Marie has much more to learn. The Kalans, whom he had originally thought of as mere mindless barbarians, demonstrate to him that his literacy and city lifestyle notwithstanding, they have many things to teach him. On the emotional level, Zambo and his three friends, le Palmipède, Abraham le Désossé, and Petrus Fils de Dieu, gradually and inadvertently introduce Jean-Marie to the world of sexual relationships and to the possibility of developing real affective relationships with people. In fact part of the comedy in Mission terminée resides in the manner in which the uninitiated protagonist is acquainted with the world of the flesh as we see in this description of his first meeting with Edima, one of the first women with whom he comes close to having a sexual relationship:

> Maintenant, je sentais son haleine me caresser le menton. Je l'embrassai longuement sur la bouche puis elle se dégagea nerveusement, comme si elle n'avait pas beaucoup apprécié le gout de mes lèvres ou de mon haleine. Je crois que c'etait mon haleine qui ne lui convenait pas: je devais puer le whisky à des metres. Puis, elle se trouva tout contremoi, je ne sais plus comment: je la serrai, la pressai contre ma poitrine dans un geste impuissant et sans issue. Elle se laissait faire, ce qui m'enhardit. Elle aussi ne portait qu'un pagne et, au toucher, je percevais avec précision tous les reliefs de son corps musclé de paysanne très jeune. N'y tenant plus, j'écartai son pagne dans un geste maladroit, excessif, hors de proportion avec l'acte à accomplir, et je découvris ses seins, son ventre, ses cuisses.... Maintenant, je la touchais un peu partout, et en même temps je me sentais gêné par mon propre corps, dont je ne voulais pas lui faire sentir le violent émoi. Sans savoir pourquoi, je craignais qu'elle ne me jugeât sévèrement: j'étais prisonnier de scrupules de puceau. C'était la première fois que je me trouvais en contact aussi étroit avec une femme. Je ne fis que cela, la tenir tout contre moi, haleter et l'attoucher.... Fatiguée probablement par mon manège, ou plus vraisemblablement encore, ne tenant pas à se donner dans des conditions aussi inconfortables et ne voulant connaître l'homme que peu à peu...elle se dégagea vigoreusement, me laissant pantelant d'un plaisir à peine entamé.
>
> Mission, pp. 134-6.

One suspects that in spite of Jean-Marie's protestations and Edima's excuses the young woman runs away from Jean-Marie because of the clumsiness of his attempts at having sex--a direct result of a complete lack of sexual experience.

But a lack of any sexual knowledge is just one of Jean-Marie's problems. He is found to be woefully lacking in practical common sense. His imperfect knowledge and the inadequacy of the colonial educational system are glaringly exposed in some scenes involving this city slicker and the Kalans. For instance, the great "scholar" is unable to explain in plain simple terms the kinds of subjects taught in school; at first he tries to bluff his way by suggesting that the villagers of Kala will not understand the nature of these subjects. But when an old man insists that it is Jean-Marie's duty as an educated individual to bring the world of school to the illiterate villagers, the student presents nothing but distortions to his audience. His attempts to give a lesson on social studies or more precisely to bring the worlds of the American and Soviet peoples to the Kalans become exercises in misinformation. After giving a cartoon-like description of New York (supposed to be his lesson on American geography), Jean-Marie goes on to describe Russian socialism in the most simplistic and confused manner. The real lesson in this episode however is the one the narrator gets from the people. He now realizes the deficiencies in the school system as well as the little practical use his knowledge has for his peop[illegible]

> C'est fou ce que les connaissances du collège sont illusoires: c'est ce jour-là que j'ai entrevu cette verité. Moi qui étais presque fier de ce que j'avais appris pendant toute cette année scholaire, voila qu'à la première vérification réele de mes connaissances, celle de la vie même, et non celle factice de l'examen, je découvrais des trous énormes dans mon petit royaume, trous que j'essayais de colmater désespérément, en mettant mon imagination à rude épreuve. Pourtant si j'avais eu la Russie à l'oral de mon baccalauréat, je m'en serais bien sorti--de l'oral non de la Russie.
>
> Mission, p. 100.

Other examples showing further ways in which Jean-Marie is "educated" abound. In one episode the narrator tries to answer a question on what literate people like himself will do when they leave school; Jean-Marie answers that "nous rendons la justice... nous

travaillons dans les bureaux...nous ferons des tas de choses." But this response throws the boy into the local chief's trap. The Chief, already feeling threatened, quickly asks, "Vous ne serez donc pas des chefs comme moi?" The narrator's short stay in Kala has, however, taught him enough diplomacy to answer the chief in these words: "chef, la chefferie est héréditaire: elle ne se donne pas à l'école." In another incident, a woman pertinently asks Jean-Marie about the attitude of people such as Jean-Marie himself and other literate ones toward the illiterate country folk; here again, we suspect that even though the woman seems sceptical about the young man's answer such discussions will guide the hero's future actions.

Finally, while making the necessary connection with the original thread of the story, Beti prepares the scene for Jean-Marie to make a formal request to the chief for the return of Niam's wife. Here again, we see the protagonist getting some more doses of knowledge. Zambo appropriately reminds his cousin that, contrary to Jean-Marie's personal opinions, he was sent, above all, to retrieve Niam's wife, and it is therefore not Jean-Marie's place to abandon the woman and start passing moral judgements; according to Zambo:

> Elle est peut-être mal propre...comme tu dis. Mais son mari en a besoin pour lui tenir sa maison, lui préparer à manger, lui travailler ses champs: n'est-ce-pas l'essentiel? On t'a envoyé ici, non pour savoir si cette femme est malpropre, mais pour la ramener. C'est tout.
>
> Mission, p. 202.

Enough reason for Jean-Marie to comment that Zambo has "quand même beaucoup de bon sens, plus de sens que moi." When the chief presides over the trial of Niam's wife and her lover on charges of adultery Beti, as if to register his main thesis again, allows his narrator to observe that, in addition to a good use of common sense and the practical application of abstractions such as "freedom," "love," and "unity," there is a system of justice and fairplay even in the "bush."

It is perfectly logical, therefore, that by the end of Jean-Marie's mission he becomes a completely new person. Thus, he finds it quite nauseating to even think of

asking his father for forgiveness for his failure at school (as he almost automatically would have done on previous occasions). More significantly, however, the young man now fully understands the kind of destructive influence selfish and inconsiderate people such as his father have upon the young:

> Vous rappelez-vous l'époque? Les pères menaient les enfants à l'école, comme on pousse des troupeaux vers un abattoir. Des villages de brousse, éloignés de plus de cinquante kilomètres, arrivaient de tout jeunes enfants, conduits par leur parents, pour s'inscrire à une école, n'importe laquelle. Population pitoyable, ces jeunes enfants! Hébergés par de vagues parents autour de l'école ou de vague relations de leur père, mal nourris, faméliques, rossés à longeur de journée par des ignares, abrutis par des livres qui leur présentaient un univers sans ressemblance avec le leur, se battant sans cesse, ces gosses-là, c'était nous, vous rappelez-vous? Et ce sont nos parents qui nous poussaient. Pourquoi cet acharnement?
>
> Mission, p.231.

Every one in Jean-Marie's home village soon notices, of course, the changes that have taken place in the young man, as is seen in this conversation with his aunt Amou:

> ---C'est drôle comme tu peux avoir changé, ma petite carpe. Ça c'est drôle, tu n'est plus le même du tout.
> ---En quoi est-ce que j'ai changé?
> ---Oh, Je ne pourrais te dire exactement, mais tu ne te ressembles plus, on dirait un garçon qui aurait simplement tes traits, ta démarche, ta taille.
>
> Mission, pp.238-39.

Further evidence of the positive nature of Jean-Marie's unpremeditated learning experience in Kala is seen in his behaviour when he returns home. He refuses to accept any more beatings from his father and he also decides to do things at his own pace and discretion. Even though Jean-Marie starts showing his independence in a rather clumsy way (as is seen, for example, in the way he deliberately provokes a confrontation between himself and his father), he eventually makes it clear to everyone that he is now prepared to live a new and better and more independent life.

He not only takes the right step of discontinuing his marriage to Edima (which, after all, he had only agreed to in order to spite his father), he also decides to re-sit the baccalauréat (which he passes) and then joins his cousin Zambo to search for more experiences in the outside world. In fact, one can say that when Jean-Marie describes their life together as one in which:

> Nous avons bu dans le même verre, aimé les mêmes femmes, mangé dans le même plat, subi les mêmes prisons, les mêmes tortures, connu les mêmes angoisses, les mêmes déceptions, les mêmes joies.
>
> Mission, p.250.

he is re-articulating in a metaphorical manner the way he has put his experience in Kala into practice. The narrator points out symbolically how, after Kala, he and his illiterate cousin combine their talents to confront the vicissitudes of life. Beti's final point therefore seems to be that it is necessary not only to structure the educational system in such a way that it can be more relevant to the society it is supposed to serve but also to make sure that students benefitting from this kind of education do not ignore the immense potential of their intelligent, even if illiterate, countrymen. Seen in this light, it will not be far- fetched to suggest that Mission terminée ends on an optimistic note and not as a work which merely leaves us with two juvenile delinquents as has been suggested in some critical circles.[13]

In this discussion of some of the earliest African Novels of Personal Development I have, in addition to showing the apprenticeship qualities of these Cameroonian novels, made constant references to the more popular areas of critical interest, i.e. the anti-imperialist and anti-clerical themes. This has been unavoidable for two reasons. In the first place , one cannot discuss this type of novel without at least alluding to the different aspects of the referential world of the novel. Second, it is only by considering the various ways in which the protagonists at various times look at, among other things, a few of the most powerful pillars of colonialism--the church, the civil administration, the machinery of justice and the school system that we can really see the kinds of development that these adolescent heroes go through. I have also demonstrated that because generic approaches have been largely neglected in the criticism of these early works by two of Africa's major writers, certain key readings of these texts have not been made. Although one can say (with some irony, of course), that it was good that the censors failed to notice the close kinship between Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and the two other novels discussed, I think that at least some of the negative criticism of Beti would have been avoided if scholars had

made the necessary generic connections among these novels.

A. Notes

[1] Eza Boto, Ville cruelle (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1954). Alexandre Biyidi used the pseudonym of Eza Boto only in this first piece. Beginning with Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba he adopted the name Mongo Beti --the pseudonym by which he is universally known.

[2] "Beti (Mongo, Alexandre Biyidi, dit--) Cameroun, 1931" Dictionnaire des auteurs de langue française, ed. p. 53.
I should point out as well that the editors of the Dictionnaire are not unique among those people who even decades after the publication of Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba refuse to give that Beti novel its due credit. For example, Buchet/ Chastel who published Beti's Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur in 1974 failed to acknowledge Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba as part of Beti's oeuvre. According to what is printed on the cover blurb of Perpétue: "Après la publication de ses deux premiers romans: Mission terminée (Prix Sainte-Beuve) et Le Roi miraculé, la critique a été unanime pour reconnaître en Mongo Beti un des meilleurs écrivains noirs contemporains."
To date Mongo Beti's oeuvre includes fictional works such as Ville cruelle (1954), Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba (1956), Mission terminée (1957), Le Roi miraculé (1958), Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur (1974), Remember Ruben (1974), La Ruine presque cocasse d'une polichinelle (1979), L'Enfance précaire et cahoteuse de Guillaume Dzewatama (1982), and a political essay Main basse sur le Cameroun (1972). Since 1979 Beti has been editor and publisher of one of the most promising and progressive journals on modern African art, culture, literature, politics and economy, Peuples Noirs/Peuples Africains.

[3] Mongo Beti, Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1976). This novel was first published by Lafont in 1956. Page references are however to the 1976 edition abbreviated as PCB after long quotations.

[4] --------, Mission terminée (Paris: Buchet/ Chastel, 1957). All references are to this edition abbreviated as Mission after long quotes.

[5] The anti-clerical and anti-colonial themes have been treated by a large number of critics including the following:
Thomas Cassirer, "The Dilemma of Leadership as Tragi- Comedy in the Novels of Mongo Beti," L'Esprit Créateur, 10 (1970), 223-33.
Thomas Melone, Mongo Beti: l'homme et le destin (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1971).
William Umezinwa, "Révolte et création artistique dans l'oeuvre de Mongo Beti," Présence Francophone, 10 (1975), 35-48.
Other critics who have also referred to Beti's fine style, especially his use of irony include:
Kwabena Britwum, "Irony and the Paradox of Idealism in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba," Re: Artes Libérales, V1, 2 (1972), 48-68.
Eustace Palmer, Growth. pp.124-59.

Dorothy Blair, African Literature in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 209-11.

Stephen H. Arnold, "The New Mongo Beti," See Note 14, chapter 3.

[6] Mongo Beti, "Le Pauvre christ de Bomba Expliqué!...." Peuples Noirs/Peuples Africains, 19 (Jan-fév 1981), 104-32. As Beti indicates in this article, he actually had wanted the essay to be published as a postscript to the 1976 edition of the novel but the publishers at

"Présence Africaine" had refused to do so.

[7] --------, 117-18.

[8] See Roy Pascal, The German Novel, p.11.

[9] Ferdinand Oyono, Une vie de boy (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1956). All references are to this edition abbreviated as Boy after long quotations. It should also be mentioned that in addition to this novel, Oyono has also published Le Vieux nègre et la médaille (1956) and Chemin d'Europe (1960).

[10] Palmer, Growth, p.133.

[11] Palmer, on p.133 of his Growth, and Blair in African Literature in French (p.212), refer to Mission terminée as a picaresque novel. I subscribe more to the views of a critic like Judith Gleason who sees that Beti novel as being in the Wilhelm Meister tradition. See Judith Gleason, This Africa: Novels by West Africans in English and French (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 157.

[12] Marianne Hirsch, 299.

[13] Palmer, Growth, p. 154. According to Palmer "a home like Jean-Marie's is bound to produce delinquents in the end and it is thus not surprising that this is what eventually happens to both Medza boys." This statement not only shows the danger of reading a text only at its literal level but also of projecting real life conclusions into the fictional world of literary texts. There is no evidence in the text to suggest that Jean-Marie becomes a delinquent like his elder brother. One should take his references to "prisons," "tortures" and so forth as symbolic allusions to their combined struggle for survival.

VI. Aspects of Formal education and the Novel of Personal Development: Jumbam, Kone and Abruquah

If, in examining the links among novels we have been and will be discussing, we were to focus our attention only on thematic constructs, it would be difficult if not impossible to see the the connections among these texts. It does not require much reading for one to realize, for example, that on a purely thematic level the links among novels such as Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Une Vie de boy, Amadou Koné's Les Frasques d'Ebinto and Buchi Emecheta's Second Class citizen (to name only a few) are, at best, tenuous. Unlike in the Beti and Oyono novels where the anti-ecclesiastical and anti-imperialist themes are such dominant subjects (and hence play very important roles in the experiences of their respective heroes), in Les Frasques d'Ebinto and Second Class citizen these themes are virtually absent.

But, as I have argued, one of the advantages of generic criticism is that it encourages a systematic and, at the same time, flexible approach to the study of literary texts that thematically would seem totally unrelated. In this regard, some recent remarks on the nature of genre and genre criticism by Maurice Evans are quite in order:

> Genres...are not rigid classes possessing identical properties; the resemblances between the members of a genre are more like those of family likeness, unmistakable yet elusive and often involving atavisms. The generic "kind" is a family group possessing a generic repertoire of qualities one or more of which will be owned in some degree by every family member, but the relationship between them is often that of a shared stock rather than a specific likeness.... By its very nature therefore, the "kind" is a flexible and variable thing, and the exploitation of its potential leads inevitably to change.[1]

It is because of these special characteristics of literary genres that novels as thematically different as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Les Illusions perdues, David Copperfield, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba can be said to be generically related. This, of course, is not to deny the importance of thematic affinities of works belonging to the same genre. In fact one can say that the need for generic criticism becomes greater whenever we realize that, in addition to other generic qualities, certain literary works share the same types of themes. It is for this reason that I

shall start this chapter with a discussion of The White Man of God[2] by Kenjo Jumbam, an anglophone Cameroonian. Although this novel, published in 1980, was the last to be published among the texts to be discussed in this chapter, it is necessary to start off with The White Man of God because, as a brief summary of it will show later on, it provides a good thematic link between those West African apprenticeship novels whose themes include a solid examination of the church and the colonial administration (Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Une Vie de boy) and some "romans d'apprentissage" whose major points of interest include a scrutiny of the effects of the formal school system on young West Africans (Mission terminée, Les Frasques d'Ebinto, and Abruquah's The Torrent).

But before I start analysing these novels I should perhaps mention (in albeit a general manner) the way the formal school system has been presented in the European Novel of Personal Development. It is particularly important for me to do this because of the significant role formal education plays in all of the apprenticeship novels I shall be dealing with in this chapter. It is obvious as well that by looking (even if only briefly) at the way the school system is depicted in the European apprenticeship novel, we shall be better prepared in the end to tackle questions such as those dealing with literary influence, adaptation, independent development and so forth.

Even a brief glance at apprenticeship novels such as David Copperfield, The Mill on the Floss, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and Of Human Bondage shows that the authors of these works use their protagonists' stay in school to comment (often ironically) on the general nature of the school system (curriculum, discipline). These novelists also generally point out the tremendous effect the educational system has on young impressionable minds. One simply needs to think of Dickens' descriptions of certain episodes in Salem House, Joyce's portrayal of Stephen's experiences in Clongowes Wood and Belvedere colleges, George Eliot's depiction of Tom Tulliver's tribulations at the Reverend Stelling's to see the unrelenting attack these authors launch on what they perceive as inadequate educational systems. This is not to suggest that they are against

education. On the contrary, these writers are for better education. This is seen, for example, in the scathingly ironic description of poor quality teachers such as Dickens' Creakles, Eliot's Reverend Stelling, and Joyce's Father Dolan and Mr. Tate. We also notice the manner in which they depict those characters who make learning a worthwhile endeavour, as is seen in the presentation of characters such as Dr. Strong in David Copperfield and Father Arnall in Joyce's Portrait. One should also emphasize that, related to this type of character delineation, is a general attack on the curricula of these different fictional schools. Dickens and other authors of Novels of Personal Development often point out that in most instances the kind of education given at these fictional schools is stifling and far removed from the reality of the human world. It is also a fact however that the apprenticeship heroes are often shown to have benefited from both positive and negative experiences gained in these institutions. With this concise summary of the manner in which the formal school system is presented in non-African apprenticeship novels in mind we should perhaps turn our attention to some aspects of formal education and the Novel of Personal Development in Africa.

As was previously mentioned, we shall start with Kenjo Jumbam because of the way he deals with both the anti-clerical theme and the subject of the effects of formal education on the apprenticeship hero. Jumbam, whose Lukong and the Leopard and the White Man of Cattle[3]--a pair of stories for secondary school readers--was published in 1975, was born at Nso in the Bamenda region of anglophone Cameroon. A very cosmopolitan yet equally unassuming man, Jumbam created inconspicuous history in 1980 when his White Man of God became the first novel written by an anglophone Cameroonian to be published by a reputable publishing house.[4]

The White Man of God, recounted mainly as the reminiscences of the narrator Tansa, covers an unspecified period between Tansa's childhood and young adulthood, centering on two popular themes in African literature--childhood and religion. It is necessary to have the retrospective nature of the narrative continually in mind because, without

taking that element into consideration, one could easily and wrongly fault Jumbam (as at least one reviewer has done) for inserting into that novel "perhaps too many events which are not always mutually relevant."[5] Narrating from the first person point of view and using two essential components of mnemonic narrative--re-created dialogue and anecdote--the rather sensitive narrator describes in simple, though highly evocative prose, his process of growth and development in a household that, with the notable exception of his maternal grandmother, Yaya, has been completely won over by the Catholic church. Tansa also shows the manner in which he matures from being an uncritical (one might even say fanatical) believer in church doctrine (as opposed to Christianity) into a less zealous and ironically more humane and sincere Christian.

Because The White Man of God is made up of seemingly disparate even though ultimately related episodes, it is difficult to give a plot summary of the novel. Suffice it to say however that this Jumbam text deals with young Tansa's gradual and eventual comprehension of the basic distinction between people who are genuinely religious and those who are merely fanatics. We get a hint of this at the outset when we notice that the young raconteur is heavily preoccupied with very important theological and metaphysical issues such as those dealing with the nature of God's punishment for sinners and the interrelated questions of hell and damnation.

These topics have become very important for Tansa not only because they are the source of constant tension among members of his otherwise peaceful and stable family (the tension is often between Tansa's overzealous "Christian" parents and his astute "pagan" grandmother), but also because these frightening subjects are constantly being used by certain members of the Christian community to intimidate seemingly wayward Christians, especially children. In scenes which span from as far back as the arrival of the first white man in the region and come right up to the time Tansa stands on the threshold of manhood, Jumbam creates situations in which the narrator is able to witness, participate in, or listen to descriptions of certain events which not only help illustrate the novel's main themes but

also help portray the text as an apprenticeship novel.

Using a family visit by Tansa's grandmother, Yaya, as the starting point, Jumbam skilfully introduces several episodes which demonstrate that Christianity as practised by most members of that church community (including some of the priests) is really a mockery of the tenets of the Christian religion. Tansa, who always had some lingering doubts about some of the church's teachings (though like most others he had been brainwashed to such an extent that he is too scared to question such doctrine), is eventually profoundly influenced by his grandmother and some members of the village community. His final change manifests itself when he returns home from the town of Shisong where he had spent several years acquiring elementary education. Tansa's belief in God remains unshaken but, like Denis in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, he seems ready at the end of the novel to start life as a genuine Christian. Christianity for him becomes a religion that is devoid of bigotry and one that demands a basic humanity and good sense.

Even on the basis of this plot summary one might agree with Chris Dunton's view that "The White Man of God seems indebted to The Poor Christ of Bomba".[6] Events in The White Man of God are related, as in the Beti novel, by a naive reporter. The Catholic church is also made the target of sustained attacks by both of these Cameroonian writers. However, it is in Jumbam's use of irony that his affinity with Beti seems to have been most pronounced. But before we examine Jumbam's overall narrative strategy (especially his use of irony) I should re-emphasize the primacy of irony in the Novel of Personal Development. Irony has indeed been a dominant structural quality of the apprenticeship novel from texts such asWilhelm Meister right up to contemporary African novels belonging to that genre.

In a very real way, Jumbam's novel can be seen as the first African novel which critically examines some of the most fundamental premises of the Catholic church, indeed of the Christian religion --church doctrine dealing with the subjects of disembodied existence, hell, and the afterlife. Whereas most African writers treating the subject of religion

(for example, Aluko, Achebe, Beti and others) have often concentrated on the principal agents of the church or mosque (Ousmane), and also on the pernicious collaboration between religious institutions and the state, Jumbam uses the family unit and the perspective of a growing boy as his base for probing into these highly emotional and abstruse issues.

We can therefore say that Jumbam, like his francophone compatriots (Beti and Oyono), is fully aware of the dangers involved in challenging these issues that are so central to the Catholic church. Like these other novelists Jumbam shields himself from possible charges of authorial intervention and misrepresentation by exploiting one of the most fundamental structural components of irony--the character's ignorance stemming from innocence--for the treatment of his major themes. This strategy is particularly desirable in an apprenticeship novel where the basic structural pattern often shows the protagonist's movement from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge and self-awareness. The following passage, which is stylistically quite typical of Jumbam's narrative, illustrates the manner in which he puts his narrator's ignorance to effective use. Tansa, who as usual had been sent off early in the morning to attend daily church services, comes across a squirrel on the bush track leading to church. The squirrel, afraid of the boy, dashes into the surrounding bushes for safety. The animal's reactions suddenly remind Tansa of the subjects he apparently has heard so much about: sin, God's punishment, and hell. Tansa then starts soliloquizing on these questions:

> Do squirrels have their own church, I wondered. Perhaps this squirrel had been sent by his mother to go to church and he had come to steal carrots. Do squirrels go to confession? This one had been stealing and if he did not confess his sin he would certainly go to hell fire.That would be terrible. Suppose after stealing the carrots I had killed him dead, where would his soul go? Or suppose after me he had run into a trap! He would have no time to confess his theft, or even to repent, for the pain of the snare would be so terrible that he would have no time to repent. Then he would die with sin on his soul. Would that be a mortal sin or a venial sin? Do animals have the same hell or heaven as men? That would be terrible, with the wailing of every creature, a man crying, a woman crying, a child crying, a lion roaring, a cow mooing, a dog barking--all that noise in one hot, burning hole. Terrible! But why did God make such a thing as hell? No, let me not ask lest he hears and gets angry and casts me there. That would be terrible! What would I do? I would burn everyday, world without end! No, no, I will always go to church as Mama says. I will never stay away from church even for one day. What will God do to Yaya? Ah Yaya! She does not go to church, not even on Sundays.

> Will God put her in hell-fire too? Such a good and kind woman as Yaya? Please God, don't.
>
> TWMG, pp.7-8.

It has been necessary to quote this passage in its entirety not only because of the way in which it portrays the narrator's innocence but because of its functional importance. Exploiting Tansa's simplicity to the full, Jumbam introduces the major themes that are to be examined in the novel: the question of interminable punishment for sins committed on earth, the problem of non-redemption and non-forgiveness for people who do not go through the Catholic ritual of confession, the riddle of what happens to morally upright people who might not necessarily subscribe to the Christian religion, the very nature of sin, and indeed the veracity of hell as an institution. We are also made aware of the roles of two of the participants in the debate over these issues (Tansa's mother and grandmother respectively) as well as the boy's misgivings about at least some of the church's teachings. It is characteristic of Jumbam's style that, using the narrator's innocence as a suitable mask, he often introduces a most damaging attack on either church doctrine or the victims of such doctrine in a very casual manner. Examples of these situations which allow the protagonist to learn more (at times inadvertently) about religious and social institutions as well as the world of grown-ups abound, but a few specific illustrations will be enough.

When Tansa and his friend Lukar discover a dead man sitting on a tree from which they wanted to catch some young palm birds, the incident immediately provokes a discussion on the after-life and especially on the nature of hell. During this discussion, in which the two friends speculate on where they think the dead man's soul has gone, Tansa raises a more troubling question:

> "He must be suffering terribly, Lukar. And you say he will suffer like that forever and ever, world without end! Don't you think that one day God will feel sorry for him and take him out of hell-fire?" I asked.
> "No, once in hell-fire, there forever," Lukar said.
> "If I had a father like that who would punish me every day I would run away from him," I said.
> "If you run away from God you will only go to Satan, and Satan will put you in hell-fire because that is his home," Lukar said.

> "He is the king of hell-fire."
> Well then, if you offend God he will put you in hell-fire. You go to Satan, he will put you in hell-fire. It seems to me that either way is the same," I said.
> TWMG, p. 14.

The novelist is obviously raising pertinent questions here about an issue that is very dear to Christians, the notion of reward and punishment after death, but by allowing the two young boys to discuss the question solely from their own perspective he avoids any charge of blasphemy, impiety and distortion. In another episode Tansa overhears but cannot understand a conversation which clearly shows the whorish manner in which some of the Christian women have to get money to pay for their eventual redemption bought with church contributions and baptism. When Widin, a friend of Tansa's elder sister, Maria, suggests implicitly to another friend, Paulina, that she should go prostitute herself (as Widin herself often does in order to get her church dues), Tansa starts wondering to himself: "Paying their church contribution, buying Easter dresses, sin-ah, sin. What was sinful about that? Perhaps they [Widin and Paulina] were planning to rob the men." Jumbam's goal is made partly evident from scenes such as these but they also help to stress the hero's ignorance at the start. In these early scenes the boy believes in almost everything (including dogma) that emanates either directly from the church or indirectly through his parents.

After nearly crashing to his death because of a wrong move he makes while attempting to climb a tree, Tansa's only real concern is with Satan and the devil's bid to get him. In a manner that is reminiscent of Beti's Denis, he emphasizes that calling the "White Man of God" a wicked man is sacrilegious. This is in spite of the priest's obvious callousness and inconsideration towards the church congregation (for instance, he brutally kicks an obviously sick woman out of church service because she dares to cough when he is just getting ready to deliver his sermon). Lastly, on the occasion when Tansa and other children belonging to the Catholic mission provoke a quarrel with some boys of the Baptist church, we are shown the worst effects of religious intolerance, especially upon the young. By echoing what they must have heard from adult members of their respective religious denominations, the children reveal damaging religious hatred. Jumbam also uses

this incident to expose the moral bankruptcy of some of the religious leaders. One of the warring children reveals for example that the seemingly high and mighty priest has actually been having a sexual liaison with one of Tansa's adolescent female colleagues. If one wonders why the rather perceptive and sentient Tansa seems so gullible in the beginning, especially on the subject of Christian dogma, it is mainly because those characters who correspond roughly to the Greimasian category of "faux-destinateur" have done nothing but hammer the most perverted views about Christianity into the heads of Tansa and other children during their crucial formative years.

Foremost in this group of characters is the narrator's mother, Lalav, whom he usually refers to as Mama. One of the staunchest and most inflexible believers in the Christian faith to have been created in African literature, Mama is portrayed as doing everything she can to make sure that members of her family accept quite credulously everything (including dogma) that the church offers. Under the banner of religion, Tansa's parents and some church officials nearly smother the boy's normal growth pattern. For example, instead of encouraging the spirit of enquiry (which seems latent in Tansa) these characters try to suppress any of the boy's opinions that seem to run counter to church doctrine.

There is the ironic suggestion however that it is this attempt to protect the church's teachings from any real scrutiny that drives the boy to probe further into the nature and meaning of his parents' beliefs. We see that Tansa continues to participate in "pagan" ceremonies even though he is aware of the severe punishment he will receive from his parents for such actions. In spite of his parents' predictable objections, Tansa has serious discussions about religion at school; in fact it is strongly suggested that the protagonist acquires a better understanding of Christianity in the end largely because of the discussions at school. But Tansa's parents are not the only characters who abdicate at least part of their responsibility in guiding the hero on the right path towards the novelistic truth. One of the priests nicknamed "Big Fadda" is another such character.

Following the example of writers such as Achebe and Beti, Jumbam presents more than one missionary working with Africans in the text. The priests in The White Man of God are, however, more like Achebe's in Things Fall Apart than Beti's in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba. Unlike in the Beti novel where one cannot easily make distinctions between les pères Drumont and Le Guen, one definitely realizes that in the Jumbam work there is a clear difference between racist, "superior" colonialists (camouflaging as pastors) and the more dedicated, genuine and compassionate members of the holy order. However, the links between the bad priest, Big Fadda, and Father Drumont are unmistakable. Jumbam's portrayal of this missionary whose insensitivity and racism are only matched by his stupid and distorted ways of spreading the "holy word" is worthy of note.

Big Fadda is shown from several perspectives to be very arrogant, unjustifiably brutal, and, worst of all, a religious hypocrite. While he and his lieutenant, the catechist, are always haranguing the Christian society about sin and the dire consequences that await sinners after death, these two religious authorities commit some of the worst sins. The priest has sex with at least one adolescent girl while the catechist is exposed as being behind one of the masks he often denounces in church as "pagan" products. It is this group of characters (Tansa's parents, some church leaders and others) which is responsible for introducing false notions about God and religion to the growing boy. For these characters, God is an unforgiving, callous distributor of punishment, and religion consists mainly of brimstone and fire.

Fortunately, however, we notice that by the novel's end Tansa has grown to become a young man who, even though believing in a deity, is no longer the trusting believer in Christian dogma. Although the uncharacteristic, highly omniscient tone of voice adopted by the narrator to emphasize this point at the end of the novel certainly jars with the overall structural pattern of The White Man of God, it still conveys the work's final message:

> But strange, very strange that God should treat human beings worse than man. I cannot see Maria or her husband punishing Joseph or George, causing them to

> cry and pine for a whole day, let alone a week and a month and a year and worse, for ever. Yet they say our soul is God's or part of God, for God breathed in the lifeless statue he moulded and it became man. So man is the soil of the earth plus God's breath. And yet, when the soul parts from the body and earth welcomes the body, God casts the soul into eternal flames! God!
>
> TWMG, p. 151.

In order to reach this stage of mental awareness Tansa, like other apprenticeship heroes, has to overcome moral, intellectual and other such obstacles created by the "faux-destinateurs." He is greatly assisted in this regard by, above all, his grand-mother (who conveniently fits into the category of "destinatrice"), and a host of other characters which includes a Reverend Father (Cosmas), villagers such as Pasika, and some of Tansa's friends (Tom, Lucy, Feliy, and Lukar).

As a character whose major function is to guide the hero on the right path towards the novelistic truth, Yaya is a real success. Whereas Mama tries to teach or to convince people about religion through menace, Yaya puts her case for moderation and good sense in religious matters by using common sense and irrefutable logic. The old woman never denies the existence of God, but she finds it absurd to believe that a particular sect's conception of God should be accepted as the ultimately correct one. While alluding only to common every day things and while articulating her ideas in a most sophisticated way, Yaya continually shows the flaws in the kind of Christianity practised by her daughter.

She can not understand, for instance, why Mama thinks it is possible for European intermediaries (read: ancestors) to mediate on behalf of Africans while Mama and some other Christians say that it is impossible for their own African forefathers to negotiate with God on their behalf. Yaya also questions the goodness of a God "who puts a man in hell-fire and lets him burn like wood, never dying but crying there every day for ever and ever while God never lifts an eye of mercy to him" (p. 33). Yaya, the "pagan," is the one who by example demonstrates tolerance and a sense of fairplay and justice. She objects to adults punishing children on the basis of contorted logic, and she has nothing but the highest regard for genuine ethical standards. This does not mean that Jumbam idealizes Yaya (we see, for example, that she is quite traditional when it comes to the question of

families choosing husbands for their daughters), but it is her positive qualities (sound judgement, kindness, and fairness) that are often stressed.

Father Cosmas is, with the exception of Yaya, the most positive source of influence on the growing boy. Unlike his supercilious peers at the Catholic mission, Father Cosmas demonstrates that for one to be truly religious one has to practise what one preaches. With the arrival of this White Man of God, the people in Tansa's village realize for the first time that haughty and even cruel behaviour are not innate characteristics of white evangelists. Being an honest shepherd of his flock (although these are words he characteristically never uses), Father Cosmas shows genuine concern for the physical and spiritual well-being of both Christians and non-Christians. His unassuming attitude, his irreproachable behaviour towards people and his knack for making the words of the Gospels palatable to the villagers make him their true friend. In scenes that easily remind one of Achebe's descriptions of Mr. Brown, the first missionary in Umuofia, Jumbam shows Cosmas as a man of outstanding cordiality, decency, and consideration. It is an index of this priest's goodness and popularity that Yaya, who all her life had been objecting to Christianity, invites father Cosmas to debate some church doctrine before she finally agrees to be baptized and, second, that the whole village community becomes so genuinely moved when they learn of Cosmas' illness and eventual death.

THe White Man of God qualifies as a Novel of Personal Development in many ways. Capitalizing on irony as an effective structural mechanism, Jumbam depicts Tansa's growth from a young; naive, religious zealot into a mature and compassionate Christian. The novel also provides ample examples of those characters ("destinateur," "opposant," etc) who generally should be present in any successful apprenticeship novel. It is unfortunate however that Jumbam merely makes a passing reference to the way in which Tansa is supposed to have been influenced at school. The narrator states that "in school we used to argue like that. We took sides even in class and argued over a minor issue for a long time. Back at home my parents would not tolerate this, especially if it concerned the

action of a priest"(p. 83). It is thus implied that school was a major source of influence upon the narrator but we are never made to see in what way. Given Jumbam's unquestionable ability to describe scenes and re-create dialogue, one can say that if at least a few of the school scenes were demonstrated rather than stated they would have added even more to the artistic quality of the work. Such scenes would also have made the connections between this novel and two others to be discussed in this chapter--Les Frasques d'Ebinto and The Torrent--more evident.

Les Frasques d'Ebinto,[7] by Amadou Koné of the Ivory Coast, could have been more appropriately labelled Les Malheurs d'Ebinto because it portrays more of the misfortunes than the pranks of the leading character. It shows the disasters that meet the adolescent hero, Ebinto, when he is removed from the romantic, text-book chimera of school and thrown into the real world. Ebinto, who had been sent by his mother (his only living parent) to go through the formal educational system in the big town of Bassam, continues to make progress until he gets embroiled in love relationships with two different girls.

Initially, Ebinto seems to be in love with his guardian's daughter, Monique, until he meets Muriel, an upper class and more urbane classmate who, while acknowledging Ebinto's gestures of friendship, makes it clear to him that she cannot be his lover; in fact Muriel soon leaves for France. In the meantime, however, Monique discovers that she is carrying a child for Ebinto with whom she had spent a night. Under pressure from both Monique's father and his own mother Ebinto is forced to marry Monique and to start a laborious search for a job. He finally secures employment as a foreman in a plantation and, as he gradually discovers the discrepancy between the illusions of life in books and the reality of life as it is, he becomes a tyrant to both his wife at home and his subordinates at work. His callous attitude towards Monique leads to her deliverance of a still-born child, but even after this incident his attitude hardly changes.

Soon Ebinto falls seriously ill and Monique, together with some of Ebinto's former victims, nurses him to recovery before, on the pretext of doing some domestic errands in

a neighbouring town, she informs Ebinto by letter of her decision to leave him. This action brings Ebinto to his senses, and he realizes the full value of Monique's love and the effects of his previous infatuation with Muriel. He therefore chases Monique, pleads with her to return and promises to start a new and better life. The story does not end however with the couple living happily ever after; Monique dies by accidental drowning as they are on their way to spend their first honeymoon in Ebinto's native village.

Now, even though thematically the story line of Les Frasques d'Ebinto is different from any "roman d'apprentissage" we have dealt with so far, the structural links between them are fairly manifest. Even if one were not alerted by Yoboue Kouassi's comments in the cover blurb on the novel that "c'est justement pour avoir su rendre cette conscience commune à partir d'une conscience individuelle que Les Frasques d'Ebinto repondent non seulement aux exigences de nous autres lecteurs, négro-africains, mais aussi à l'attente de n'importe quel lecteur où qu'il se trouve," one could still make the connections.

In terms of the narrator's rhetoric, it is evident that the end of Koné's novel is quite identical to some of the others. Speaking in a tone that reminds one of Toundi's sense of full realization just before his death in Une Vie de boy, Ebinto makes two statements at the end of Les Frasques d'Ebinto which indicate that the young widower (who is barely eighteen) is going to start a fresh and more mature life. In the first instance, the young man admits to his mother that "j'avais été trop égoiste pour ne pas m'apercevoir que si je nageais dans le bonheur, Monique, elle, continuait à vivre dans un enfer insoupçonnnable" (p. 145). Later on he signifies that even though it has been almost impossible for him to make the distinction between dreams and reality, "j'essaierai peut-être de saisir MA (sic) réalité dans ce monde chaotique où tout se heurte" (p. 146). For us to understand better the real significance of these comments and their relevance to at least one level of the novel's meaning we should take a closer look at Ebinto's character, especially from the time he moves to Grand Bassam to continue his schooling.

In conformity with most literary representations of the village or small town boy going to the big city, Ebinto is shown to be quite naive. Because of his inexperience he receives more than his fair share of initiation in both his new school at Bassam and the city of Abidjan where he is robbed of fifty francs--his total monetary possession. But it is the way that the formal school system seems to have a negative effect on Ebinto that is of more importance to us. There are several episodes in the text which show how Ebinto's imperfect knowledge blurs his vision of the real world ("réalité" as he calls it).

Though the narrator himself points out just after he moves to Bassam that "j'aimais rêver et la réalité n'avait pas une grande importance pour moi car je pensais pouvoir un jour transformer ce qui était en ce qui n'avait jamais été...," it is more from the other characters (mainly Ebinto's friends) that we learn of his inability to distinguish dreams from reality. When Ebinto starts languishing for Muriel's unreciprocated love he explains to his friend, Bazié, in a manner common to the romantics, that "on meurt même d'amour," but Bazié (like Sancho Panza) retorts that "ce sont des idées que tu as encore prises dans tes interminables lectures." Ebinto's other pal, Koula, is more blunt; he constantly reminds the narrator that "il faut que tu saches que la réalité est bien different du rêve," or "reveille-toi, Ebin. Ne rêve pas, vis." Similarly, Monsieur L., Ebinto's teacher-friend from France, keeps suggesting to him that "il faut beaucoup lire...mais il ne faut pas vivre dans les livres." When Monsieur L. hears of Ebinto's hasty marriage the teacher's first piece of advice understandably centres on the need for a more realistic assessment of things. Muriel, the idol Ebinto could not get, warns him at one time "alors ne passe pas ton temps à rêver" and, finally, Ebinto himself acknowledges that "Monique a essayé de me ramener à la réalité."

Because Ebinto's perception of the real world has been so blinkered, he turns into a real neurotic the moment he is forced to confront that world. For a long time he fails to see or understand the difference between his immature, unrequited "love" for Muriel and Monique's genuine affection for him; indeed Ebinto admits that "l'image de la jeune fille

Muriel répondit à l'idéal que j'avais crée." He thus becomes very callous to both Monique and his assistants at work. As Ebinto acknowledges, "je pris l'initiative, non de lutter pour mon bien-être mais d'être un démon." He unsympathetically deducts two thirds from a junior worker's salary simply because the worker had been ill and had not reported for duty and also treats Monique and his subordinates at work with the utmost indifference, contempt, and rudeness. When Monique delivers the still-born child, largely because of the inhuman treatment she had been receiving from Ebinto during the course of her pregnancy, her husband tries to excuse himself in a typically puerile manner by "explaining" things to his boss as follows: "le mal qu'elle m'a fait, on ne peut pas l'évaluer. Elle a brisé ma vie, deçu mes ambitions, fait de moi un malheureux contremaître de campagne" (p. 101). The reader can see however that the blame rests squarely on Ebinto's shoulders and that unless the protagonist is willing to face the world honestly he will never find happiness.

It is not until Ebinto falls seriously ill however that he starts moving in that direction. The episodes describing his illness are quite significant. Ebinto's illness literally reminds him about humility and more importantly about generosity towards his fellow human beings. Seen in this light, it becomes easy to understand why, upon Ebinto's request, Monique chooses to read from Hugo's Les Misérables, a novel in which the theme of generosity plays such a large part. But the importance of the method used to cure the young man should also be highlighted. He is made to realize that the "djakouadjo" herbs for which he had derided and punished one of his juniors at work are more effective than the nivaquine tablets he had been taking. It is Koné's description of the ways in which the herbs are used that should be stressed:

> On me mit la sève rouge sur les ongles puis on mit les feuilles et l'écorce à bouillir dans un canari. Quant tout eut bien bouilli on renversa la décoction dans un seau. Je m'assis sur un tabouret près du seau et je fus recouvert par un grand drap. Je fus baigné par la vapeur et quand on me découvrit je transpirais à grosses gouttes. Ensuite je me lavai avec la décoction refroidie. J'en bus quelques gorgées; elle était amère.
>
> Les Frasques, p. 104.

We notice that first of all Ebinto is steamed and washed with the djakouadjo; he then has to drink some of the concoction he had previously ridiculed as being useless in the treatment of sick people. One can therefore say that by allowing this traditional medicine to get rid of the illness in literally every section of Ebinto's system before he is finally cured, Koné seems to be making the implicit suggestion that both Ebinto's malady and the unsophisticated but effective treatment used in curing him have been helpful in remedying a much greater illness--delusion. Remarkably, and in true apprenticeship manner, this section marks the final transition stage for Ebinto in his movement from passivity to valid action.

From this point on Ebinto is depicted as being more sensible, charitable, and responsible. With Monique's death later on and with every thing else that he goes through, Ebinto now realizes that, helpful though formal education may be, the world of books should not be seen as a substitute for real life. This means that there is still some thematic difference between The White Man of God and, not only Les Frasques d'Ebinto but Joseph W. Abruquah's The Torrent. The school system which serves as a positive influence in Tansa's development becomes a negative force in the lives of both Ebinto and to some extent Kojo Josiah Afful, the hero of The Torrent. It is also clear however that other principal characteristics of the Novel of Personal Development are present in these novels.

Joseph W. Abruquah, who was born in Saltpond, Ghana, in 1921, graduated with an Honours degree in Geography from the University of London. He has also participated in the International Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, but is perhaps best known in literary circles for his two novels--The Catechist[8] and The Torrent[9]--the latter being the text that is relevant to this study.

The Torrent centres on a young boy's growth into awareness of the exact nature of the much-admired and elitist "Grammar" (read: Academic) school in colonial society. In much the same way that Koné's Ebinto is made to understand that the sometimes idyllic

world of school is different from the outer world of harsh realities, Kojo Josiah Afful is brought into the realization that even for brainy students the secondary Grammar school is not an earthly paradise. Kojo, the youngest and brightest pupil in the graduating class of the elementary school in his home village of Adubo, is very much impressed from a very early age by the Grammar school type of education and the numerous possibilities it offers. As a result of administrative incompetence by a colonial invigilator, Kojo is initially prevented from entering that school system, even after trekking twenty-four miles to take the entrance examinations.

Kojo's dreams soon come true, however, when responding to the invitation of an uncle, he moves to the city of Cape Coast. After a year's preparatory work, Kojo is not only able to succeed in the entrance examinations but also to gain one of the highly competitive and prestigious scholarships. But from the moment Kojo enters Grammar school his visions about that institution become gradually shattered. In scenes that are at times thematically (though definitely not stylistically) reminiscent of British apprenticeship novel writers such as Dickens, Maugham, and Joyce, Abruquah shows how Kojo gets to understand the real nature of Grammar school. The boy learns that Grammar school is not the serene and sedate establishment he had always thought it to be. It is shown as a place that can be rife with bullying and cheating among students, and at times ludicrous behaviour among teachers. In spite of the rather ambiguous ending of The Torrent, there is at least a hint that because Kojo has now seen and grasped some of the previously unknown weaknesses of the Grammar school system (which include alienation from traditional life) he will be able to confront the adult world in a less romantic manner.

It is in tracing the movement inherent in Kojo's acquisition of this type of knowledge (in his development, in other words), that we see the thematic and other parallels that exist among The Torrent, Les Frasques d'Ebinto, and The White Man of God. But since it is generally agreed that "the conception of a particular genre...[among other things] may provoke the critic's search for the total form of the same work,"[10] we should

perhaps look at aspects of Abruquah's style in comparison with at least one of the apprenticeship novels under consideration. It is especially necessary for us to do this because there seems to be quite a qualitative formal difference between The Torrent and the other West African Novels of Personal Development discussed so far.

One only has to contrast Jumbam's presentation of some scenes (domestic or otherwise) with matching scenes of Abruquah's to notice the kinds of structural defects common in The Torrent. A comparison of rather similar episodes from these two texts will serve as illustrations. When Tansa's grandmother comes on a family visit the narrator describes the initial meeting between Yaya and Mama (who was out in the farm when Yaya first arrived) in these terms:

> Soon I saw Mama coming and I ran to the door and shouted, "Mama élé élé." Beri and Lavran scrambled to the door and we all ran to welcome Mama and Maria from the farm. I took the basket from Mama, and Beri took the hoe, and Lavran took the basket from Maria. We were each shouting "Yaya has come. Mama, Yaya has come," each fighting to be heard first.
> Mama exclaimed: "Yaya, welcome! Welcome!"
> "Young woman, you and your mother are back from the farm?"
> "Yes."
> "You are very welcome!" Mama greeted.
> "Yes, you and the child are back from the farm?"
> "Yes, we usually return early. What is the news from Meluf?"
> "No news at all. All are quite well and send greetings."
> "Tata is well?"
> "Yes, he is quite well this time."
> "Thanks be to God. And Jarv and Chin Ndzelou and his brothers and sisters?"
> "They are all very well, very well, very well."
> "Mama, Mama," Beri intruded. "Mama, Yaya brought us yams and Tansa took all the big ones and ran away with them."
> I made no defence. I saw Mama look at me with the corner of her eye.... Mama suddenly turned on me.
> "What's all this disturbance when people are talking. What are you still doing here. Isn't it time for doctrine classes? Get up and go at once, and don't let me hear that you were late."
>
> TWMG, pp.3-4.

Jumbam's skilful handling of dialogue is obvious. The tone is controlled and we notice how the novelist allows his seemingly innocuous but highly observant reporter to relate everything in concise, unpretentious language. This method is what often allows the narrator to present numerous episodes from multiple perspectives in a convincing manner. If, for example, later on Mama is shown to be a religious monomaniac, we are not

totally surprised; Tansa has hinted at this right from the beginning.

But if we look at Abruquah's description of the reception given to both Kojo and his elder brother, Kwesi, when they visit their uncle Ackah in the town of Axim, we find the exact opposite of Jumbam's simple and effective style. After indicating that by virtue of age seniority Kwesi (rather than Kojo) has to handle the "speech making" part of the welcoming ceremony, the narrator then describes the scene as follows:

> "Well, my young masters," began uncle Ackah, wondering whether Afful had not spoiled the kids with European ways. "In Ashanti you would have had to start this palaver, but we follow the Fantes, so I begin. Two days ago we received a letter from...." And off he went-a long tale with much illustration and much folk wisdom. It was an art lost on Kojo. To sum it all, they were expected. "You are the travellers."
> We bring no ill tidings," began Kwesi, after calling uncle Ackah's tale good news and turning to his brother with a smile. "If nothing touches the raffia fence it doesn't rattle," he went on, and his uncle's eyes gleamed with appreciation. Afful had done his work with his offspring. "If you don't sharpen your cutlass, you go hungry." Uncle Ackah's smile threatened to break into a laugh. Kojo giggled. Kwesi was overdoing things. "We have been in school many years now. They say he who cuts a bush path does not see what goes on behind him." "Enli adale-said Omo Ackah, the mother of the house, eyes gleaming with admiration. "This year I finish school. They say, "It is long in coming has his day." "The day we are looking forward to will come. But what has come now is an entrance examination...."
>
> The Torrent, pp. 26-7

This passage is significant because of the way it typifies some of the most glaring weaknesses of Abruquah's writing style. Whereas one can say that the appeal of Les Frasques d'Ebinto and certainly The White Man of God largely derives from Koné's and Jumbam's manipulation of dialogue, with Abruquah, the presentation of interlocution among characters is often a source of stylistic disaster. In this particular passage it sounds highly improbable that Uncle Ackah (who obviously lives in a town bigger than Kojo's rather remote village) needs reassurance that his nephews have not been spoilt by "European ways." Unlike other West African writers such as Achebe, Amadi, or Soyinka who use proverbs ("the palmoil with which words are eaten", according to Achebe) in strategically important situations to depict events and characters in a vivid manner, Abruquah seems to use proverbs in irrelevant, unconvincing, and even awkward situations. Even if one accepts that, in the passage just cited, he is trying to emphasize the value of

preparing for life through the acquisition of book knowledge in the proverb about sharpening one's cutlass (it seems quite appropriate in an apprenticeship novel), it is difficult if not impossible to see the relevance of the other sententious sayings.

But in spite of these and other flaws (such as Abruquah's constant use of archaisms, his use of trite responses and "one liners" passed off as dialogue among characters), The Torrent must definitely be discussed in any study introducing the apprenticeship novel in West Africa. It can be said that this novel is partially redeemed by Abruquah's detailed and, at times, humorous account of a young West African boy's total experience as he goes through the Grammar school system, a system founded on the principles of the British Grammar school system and which therefore will not be too far removed from that described in novels such as Of Human Bondage and A Portrait of the Artist. Indeed Abruquah's novel and Wellesley-Cole's complementary autobiography--Kossoh Town Boy (1960)--are perhaps the two West African prose works which have captured the neglected world of adolescent schooling in its most vivid manner.

In this connection, I should perhaps answer some objections raised by Danièle Stewart over the subject matter of The Torrent before looking at the generic structure of the novel. According to Stewart:

> The bulk of the "novel" is concerned with the description of life in a Cape Coast Grammar School. The school's customs, with the bullying of juniors, the use of prefects, etc., are depressingly similar to those of any English "public school." What exactly is the point of recounting them in such detail.[11]

Aside from the basic fact that it is every writer's prerogative to choose his or her subject matter as well as the setting for a work, there are two major reasons why we consider it important for Abruquah to have chosen such themes and setting. First, one would assume that the novelist's choice of a colonial Grammar school environment as setting for his work should be of interest not only to the younger generation of African students who may not have gone through a similar pattern of education, but even to those readers who are already familiar with a similar educational institutions elsewhere. In short, readers willing to learn about that transposed educational system from a fictionalized account will

benefit from Abruquah's novel. Needless to say that it can serve as a good classroom complement and contrast to some of the British apprenticeship novels I have already referred to.

The apprenticeship quality of The Torrent is easily detectable from the very beginning of the text, especially if we concentrate on Kojo's character. The aspects of his personality that are most often stressed are the boy's precociousness, intelligence, ambition and inexperience. At age twelve Kojo is the youngest and brightest pupil in his class and encouraged, by his teachers, he indicates to his father that he would not, on any account, go to the post-primary Teacher Training College, the local haven for elementary school graduates. Kojo's one and only choice is a Secondary Grammar School. As the following passage shows, Kojo initially thinks of Grammar School only in grandiose terms:

> He was thinking at the time of the results of the examination he had not yet taken, but which he had passed, and of his preparations to leave Aduabo and go to Grammar school which in his imagination was a huge campus covering half the earth and filled with the world's great genuises. The hero worship he would have. His brothers and sisters gaping, and the boys and girls of Aduabo. Especially the girls, and Esie Anaman.
>
> The Torrent, pp.17-18

This perception of Grammar school as the most prestigious educational institution on earth is what motivates Kojo to do well at school, but it is also what helps to show the boy's essential ignorance about that school system. There is the suggestion that, as in the cases of Ebinto in Les Frasques d'Ebinto and Jean-Marie in Mission terminée, the kind of education Kojo has received in Aduabo has blinkered his perception of some basic things in life. Like Jean-Marie in Kala, he is scandalized when he notices the uninhibited way in which his uncle Enyima and the other co-tenants in the house at Cape Coast discuss sex and sex roles. The nature of his ignorance is thus stressed even before he joins the Grammar school. The narrator points out that Kojo's first day at the Cape Coast Government Boys' School "told him that his teachers at Aduabo had taught him nothing beyond the three R's," and that "the Government Boys' School was a very different place from the Aduabo school." But these realizations do not change Kojo's attitude towards Grammar

school. He becomes an even greater admirer of the Grammar school boys; in fact the narrator seems to echo Kojo's admiration when he describes these school boys as they march on their way to church on Sundays:

> They were a sight to gladden the hearts of ambitious youth, and Kojo and Daniel had followed them all the way from Jerusalem Street to Mission Church, and to take a better look at the heroes in gold and black.
>
> The Torrent, p.77

Later on in church the narrator seems to speak for Kojo again when he remarks that the church's pipe organ

> was glorious but the most glorious sight of all were the boys upstairs. One day [Kojo] too would be one of that band in gold and black and would swagger out of church like these, retrieving broad-brimmed felt hats and ramming it on close-cropped hair and girls would wait for him to descend, casting stolen glances at him and waiting to follow with letters especially folded to avoid detection.
>
> The Torrent, p.78

It does not take Kojo too long however to start seeing through the myth he and others like him created of Grammar school, his real initiation (an essential item in all apprenticeship novels) starts from the moment he enters the school as a boarding student. He is first of all made to understand that Grammar school boys are not the paragons of virtue he had imagined them to be. In a scene that is remindful of Jean-Marie's entry to Kala (though one cannot make any claim of literary influence here), Kojo clearly sees this in the kind of reception that is accorded to him in his new school:

> He did not know where he was going and the place had begun to intimidate him. There was noise. There was life--too much of it. There was activity. But no one took any notice of the conquering hero arriving to do fresh labours here. He was one of the early ones. One lorry was unloading in the space between giant buildings and boys were lugging steel trunks and wooden chop-boxes upstairs and shouting rude words when they got in each other's way. At irregular intervals, the noise of clattering boards was heard upstairs. But no one took any notice of the conquering hero and Josiah felt sad.
>
> The Torrent, pp.89-90

More significantly, however, Kojo gradually understands that the negative aspects of Grammar school life are worse than even the feeling of loneliness. The protagonist and other "green-horns" are ridiculed and reduced to insignificant beings in the name of initiation. True to the narrator's description, Kojo's first meal at the school turns out to be

a "harrowing experience" in which the Grammar school "gentlemen" display the worst table manners. Kojo also finds out that academically neither the staff nor his fellow students at Grammar school are the "genuises" he thought them to be. Some of the teachers such as Doku, Ablo and Agbleze have to strive "to keep more than one page ahead of their classes, not being graduates." Others, including graduates such as Mr. Mensah (the Ghanaian teacher who is nicknamed Kwesi Buronyi--a local pejorative term for a white man--because of his complete obsession with British mannerisms), Mr. Sangster and even Mr. Batten the teacher who succeeds the school's founding principal are no better. These characters who clearly are "opposants" in this apprenticeship novel, often display an astounding amount of insensitivity toward the general welfare of the students. The adolescent hero also becomes aware of the fact that inter-personal relations among the Grammar school students and staff--people he had previously regarded as exceptional and dignified beings--are indeed as petty, silly and foolish as those among people in any stratum of society. When grown-up dolts (passing off as students) such as Lamptey and de Graft Dickson are not taking advantage of younger, more hard working and more intelligent students like Kojo, some of the other students (and teachers) are engaged in acts of petty jealousy and malicious conduct. It is in fact because of such spiteful behaviour that Kojo is nearly expelled from the school at the time that the boy is taking his school-leaving examinations. When a talisman (planted by the vengeful de Graft Dickson) is found under Kojo's desk during examinations, the inconsiderate and rather foolish principal, Mr. Marshby, decides to expel Kojo from the school; fortunately, however, Dickson is soon discovered as the real culprit. One should hasten to add though that despite Kojo's knowledge of these negative aspects of Grammar school, he does not necessarily reject the system--being cognizant of the importance of the Grammar School Diploma in his society.

Although a feeling of vagueness pervades the end of The Torrent, one can assume that because Kojo has been vindicated in connection with the talisman incident he will be

allowed to re-sit the school-leaving examinations in which, on the basis of his general academic performance, we know he will be successful. It is also safe to posit that his stay at Grammar school has prepared him for a more down to earth approach to life. The young man has learned all about malice, grudge, vengeance and insecurity and we can suppose that he will henceforth be better suited for these and other pressures of the outside world.

Our examination of The Torrent will be incomplete if, once again, some reference is not made to the obvious differences in the artistic skills (especially the technique of narration) of Abruquah and novelists such as Beti, Jumbam and others. Abruquah's narrator is different from Denis, Tansa, Toundi and the other adolescent raconteurs because he is a third-person omniscient narrator. But there are problems even for an all-knowing narrator. Unlike the first person narrators in the other novels who, even when presenting multiple points of views of the other characters, try to maintain their own point of view in a fairly consistent manner, the narrator in The Torrent does not even take the trouble of explaining his omniscience. He is often able to reproduce verbatim conversations taking place where he could not possible have been and he also never indicates how he is able to record, in precise language, the "thoughts" of nearly every character in the book.

Then there is the problem of undeveloped episodes. After travelling an ardous three hundred and fifty miles to visit Lucy, the girl he loves, Kojo nearly forgets the reason for his visit. According to the narrator "after a time Josiah was in danger of what made him come here. There was so much to see--the staggering market...and the ever-present threat of the sea" (p.250). One wonders whether Kojo, who visits the relatively small town of Dzelukope (Lucy's home town), from the bigger and coastal city of Cape Coast would have been so frightened by the sea and been so much carried away by the "staggering market" at Dzelukope that he nearly forgets to go after his loved one. The narrator then informs us that Kojo finds it impossible to pursue Lucy because of some alleged killers on the way to the young woman's home. When the two "lovers" finally meet for a brief while

on the day of Kojo's departure the narrator describes their meeting in a rather pathetic manner, especially when one realizes that Lucy had braved "the men who laid traps for the unwary and was at the Lorry Park at three in the morning:

> She simply stood while the boys got their things into the lorry. She wished she had not come. She was not engaged to him. People might think she was hi jolly. Josiah had only said "Oh."
>
> The Torrent, p.251.

Although The Torrent does have many imperfections Abruquah manages to introduce many elements of the apprenticeship novel into this work. Like in the other Novels of Personal Development, there is a powerful evocation of the themes of childhood and development. We also see the various ways in which several other characters contribute toward the protagonist's growth. The texts by Jumbam and Koné are also not without problems. I have already made reference to Jumbam's failure to develop aspects of Tansa's life at school and to the heavy handed moralizing at the end which replaces the well executed passages and scenes that characterize the bulk of the novel. A number of scenes in Les Frasques d'Ebinto are also rather "soppy" and perhaps too sentimental. Koné also has the tendency to display an exaggerated knowledge of French literature. But in spite of these strictures, it can be said that, in varying degrees, each of these writers has provided some necessary insights into various aspects of adolescent development and should thus be recognized for making some contribution to the qualitative growth of West African literature.

A final reason why I think that, despite their flaws, these apprenticeship novels are important in a study such as this one is based on the pedagogical problem of motivating students to read. (This is an issue that will be treated in a more detailed manner in the conclusion). It will be adequate for now, however, to suggest that students (especially those in secondary schools) might be motivated to read more literary texts if they discover that at least some of the events described and the experiences the heroes go through in some novels of development are identical to theirs.

A. Notes

[1] Maurice Evans, "A New Map of Literature," rev. of Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes by Alastair Fowler Times Higher Educational Supplement, 4 March 1983, p.14.

[2] Kenjo Jumbam, The White Man of God (London: Heinemann, 1980). All page references are to this edition which I shall abbreviate as TWMG after long quotes.

[3] --------, Lukong and the Leopard and the White Man of Cattle (London: Heinemann, 1975).

[4] Mbella Sonne Dipoko is the only other Camroonian writing in English whose novels--Because of Women (1966) and A Few Nights and Days--have received international attention. Dipoko is however a francophone who went to school in Nigeria.

[5] David K. Bruner, "Kenjo Jumbam. The White Man of God" rev. of The White Man of God by Kenjo Jumbam, World Literature Today, Autumn 1981, 714-715.

[6] Chris Dunton, "Conflicts between Christianity and Customary Life" rev. of The White Man of God by Kenjo Jumbam, West Africa, 22 February 1982, 520.

[7] Amadou Koné, Les Frasques d'Ebinto (Abidjan: CEDA, 1975). All page references are to this edition. Koné has also published a play, De la chaire au trone (1975), and a chronicle Jusqu'au seuil de l'irréel (1976).

[8] Joseph W. Abruquah, The Catechist (London: George Allen and Unwin 1965).

[9] --------, The Torrent (London: Longmans 1968). All references are to this edition.

[10] Guillen, Literature as System. p.109.

[11] Danièle Stewart, "Ghanaian Writing in Prose: A Critical Survey," Présence Africaine, No. 91 (1974), 78.

VII. The West African Apprenticeship Hero in Europe and Africa: Loba, Oussou-Essui, Emecheta and Laye.

During the decades immediately preceding and following the declarations of independence from British and French colonialisms it was the dream of nearly every young literate West African to go abroad (invariably to the metropolis of the former colonizing power) in search of education. Although most of these young people had the best intentions to finish their studies quickly and return to help their respective countries in the process of nation building, it soon became appparent that not every one achieved these goals. For the majority of those students who had gone overseas without the necessary preparations (financial, academic, and social), the initial dreams were soon replaced by nightmares. Instead of attending academic, vocational, and other institutions as they had originally planned, these young déracinés were customarily forced to abandon their studies and join the flotsam in a life of misery, cheating and deceit in these foreign countries.

Fortunately, however, some of the students were able, as a result of their own and other people's experiences, to see the discrepancy between their initial idealized visions of life in the "mother" countries (Britain, France), and the reality of life --often hard--as it is lived in these countries. After much pain and effort some of these students were eventually able to succeed in at least part of their desired goals.

I refer to these social and non-literary events because they form the external frames of reference which some West African writers have used to create fictional reality in most of the Novels of Personal Development we shall be examining in this chapter. But, before looking at ways in which these authors have used the experiences of some young West Africans to create works that have the generic traits of the apprenticeship novel, I should point out that the image of the naive foreigner--a dominant image in these novels--is nothing new in literature. Although the image of the artless foreigner or "innocent abroad" who does not understand the culture and behaviour of his

hosts has been present in literature from the earliest times, it is from the eighteenth-century onwards that it became an established concept in literary studies.

With the rise of the genre of travel literature during the eighteenth-century, writers such as Swift (Gulliver's Travels), Voltaire (Candide, L'Ingénu), Montesquieu (Les Lettres persannes), and Sterne (A Sentimental Journey) exploited the simplicity of the foreigner to expose the foibles of their own and other countries. Writers in many countries and cultures have continued to use this technique. In Africa, examples of this usage can be found in works such as Ousmane Socé's Mirages de Paris (1937) and Dadié's Un Nègre à Paris (1959) and Patron à New York. Since the focus of these texts is essentially on the naive visitor's perception of the country he is visiting, it seems quite appropriate that they are among the principal texts Robert Pageard treats in a study on "L'Image de l'Europe dans la littérature ouest-africaine de l'expression française."[1]

In addition to such studies which look at the image of the ostensibly innocent African observer in a foreign environment, there are others such as William V. Lawson's which amply examine the depiction of the African "been-to"--especially upon re-entry to his native country.[2] It is significant though that no systematic study has been done on the fictional representation of West African students as they go through the processes of adjustment, adaptation, and in some cases, growth in these countries of their dreams.

It is obvious that many West African writers such as Hamidou Kane (L'Aventure ambiguë), Conton (The African), Achebe (No Longer at Ease), Laye (Dramouss) and Yulisa Amadu Maddy (No Past, No Present, No Future) have presented various facets of African student life in Europe; I, however, shall be concentrating mainly on texts which have received relatively less critical attention than most other African works. But relative neglect is not the major reason why I have decided to examine novels such as Aké Loba's Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir (1960), Denis Oussou-Essui's La Souche calcinée (1973), and Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen (1974). Among the more compelling reasons for looking at these novels are 1) the fact that these works, together with Maddy's No Past,

No Present, No Future, give some of the most thorough going and critical social analyses of student life (especially among the "self-sponsored" African students) in Europe; 2) perhaps more significantly, these texts show how the process of converting naive dreams into hard reality can, in some instances, ultimately lead to mental, moral and other forms of development; and 3) a consideration of the patterns of development of the protagonists in these three novels will not only help highlight the apprenticeship qualities of Laye's Le Regard du roi, a novel that is hardly regarded as one dealing with growth and development, but will also help underline the divergent forms of the "roman d'apprentissage" in West Africa.

Apprenticeship in France 1: Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir.

Aké Loba, born in the Ivory Coast in 1927, is the author of three novels--Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir (1960), Les Fils de Kouretcha (1970), and Les Dépossédés (1973). The plot of Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir[3] is quite straightforward. Kocoumbo, the hero of the novel, acting upon the advice of his illiterate and well-meaning father, leaves his rather remote Ivorian village with a primary school leaving certificate and some money to pursue further studies in France. On board ship he makes some new friends among other students who are also going to France. They soon start talking about their various aspirations and high visions of life during and after their studies. But from the moment Kocoumbo arrives at the first French stop, Marseille, and right up to the time he finally finishes acquiring his education in France, the young man is constantly made aware of the major differences between the idyllic garden he had previously imagined and the real place that France is.

Kocoumbo suffers initially from severe bouts of loneliness, feelings of home sickness and nostalgia, but these afflictions become relatively minor when he is confronted with other problems. He is exposed to the full horrors of racism, insensitivity and dogmatism by some French people, to exploitation and corruption by some of his

fellow African students, and to the general misery, squalor and degradation confronting destitute foreign students.

After quitting school prematurely, Kocoumbo finds a job in a Parisian factory. He is protected there from some rather hostile co-workers (who regard him with deep suspicion because of his education and "bourgeois" habits) by the militant and honest Denise who becomes his friend and lover. But when Denise is killed in an accident, Kocoumbo goes awaft and eventually finds himself in the sordid Parisian underworld of Pigalle. He is, in conclusion, saved by M. Gabe, a retired colonial administrator, who is not only a close friend of Kocoumbo's but also a kind of guardian for most Ivorian students going to France. M. Gabe helps Kocoumbo procure a well paying and less physically demanding job. This new situation, of course, enables the young man to finish his studies for a law diploma before returning home to the Ivory Coast as a magistrate.

In a brief reference to Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir, Oscar Ronald Dathorne, in The Black Mind: A History of African Literature, suggests that "the happy ending" of Loba's novel is "contrived" and that Kocoumbo "is lucky that he has triumphed in this hollow way."[4] Now, while it is indisputable that Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir does have some stylistic infelicities--for example, Loba's over-detailed description of the animistic nature of the village of Kouamo would have seemed overwrought even in a Balzac novel--I find it hard to accept that Kocoumbo's achievement in the end is concocted and that he has triumphed in a hollow way. Rather, I will suggest that if we take into account those generic qualities which evidently characterize this work as an example of the positive type of apprenticeship novel, then we could see how the novel's ending ties up with the rest of the story. If by the end of Loba's text Kocoumbo is in a position where he can legally pass judgement on people, it is because he has been able to acquire the type of knowledge and savvy (gained mainly through positive and negative social experiences as well as through formal education) so often demanded of a judge. It should indeed be remembered that Kocoumbo confronts and overcomes quite a number of obstacles between the time when,

as a child, he is so impressed by a lawyer that he decides to try to become one, and the period when he actually becomes a magistrate. In fact, part of this novel's strength lies in the way in which the rather naive, ill-prepared village lad dares to overcome and finally triumphs over the various hindrances that lie on the road to success.

As in most apprenticeship novels, at least some of the details with which the well-known motifs of this type of novel are developed in Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir are based on personal experiences of the novelist. Loba, like Kocoumbo, worked on his father's farm in his native village before he was sent to study overseas. Once in France, he had to work as a labourer in both Brittany and the Beauce. When his father died and Loba's sole source of income dried up he had to get a job in a factory in Paris.[5] But, though the resemblance between Loba and his hero is worthy of note, it is the degree to which Kocoumbo resembles the conventional hero of the apprenticeship novel that is of even more significance to us.

When we first meet Kocoumbo it is his innocence and ignorance that are steadily emphasized. Loba points out the boy's unspoilt nature at the outset by situating him in surroundings that have not yet been influenced by technological civilization and its attendant evils. Kocoumbo's village is described as follows:

> Le petit village de Kouamo est situé dans les entrailles même de la forêt vierge. Il est uniforme; il est identique à ses frères de la jungle africaine. La brousse barbelée de ronces, flanquées d'éperons végétaux qui s'épaulent et dissimulent les rares meurtrières, protège sa vie érémitique, le rempare, en fait une place inaccessible. A le voir ainsi cloîtré et défendu, on oublie qu'il est proche de la ville aux constructions neuves, denuée de tout vestige d'évenements obscurs ou glorieux et dont il dépend au point de vue juridique. Camouflé, invisible, Kouamo semble poursuivre une existence libre et assoupie comme un songe.
>
> Kocoumbo, p. 9

This and other passages depicting some of Kocoumbo's daily activities in the village serve as initial indicators to the boy's unsophisticated character. Though he has finished elementary school, Kocoumbo is still deeply entrenched in traditional ways. He actively participates in traditional dances and he also understands that he has to prove his manhood by killing some big game. The adolescent hero, like his father (Old Oudjo) is a firm believer

in tradition as we see in Old Oudjo's (and implicitly, Kocoumbo's) attitude towards the big city. In the words of the narrator:

> Depuis deux ans que ce fils avait obtenu son certificat d'études, il n'avait pas voulu le laisser aller travailler en ville dans les bureaux. Il se serait bien gardé de l'envoyer se corrompre. La ville était à tout le monde et n'appartenait à personne. Elle ressemblait à une pirogue vide sur la lagune; nul ne la guidait; c'était le vent seul qui l'entrainait. La ville n'était peuplée que de gens sans village, sans tribu.
>
> Kocoumbo, p. 24

Loba goes to great lengths to present Kocoumbo spending part of his formative years in an outlandish place such as Kouamo not only because his experiences there will serve as effective contrasts to those he goes through in France, but also because they will help explain some of Kocoumbo's seemingly inexplicable and strange actions overseas. But, although the protagonist is shown to be unblemished in these rather quaint surroundings, it is when his father decides to send Kocoumbo to France that the boy's real ignorance and innocence begin to manifest themselves. He starts by developing an illusion of Paris as some kind of fairy land:

> Paris! Ce seul mot le faisait sauter de plaisir. Paris, c'était un autre monde où scintillaient des miracles, où résidait le bonheur. Bien que n'ayant pas une idée exacte de ce bonheur, il s'en réjouissait déjà de toute son âme....
> Pour lui, c'était l'image d'un monde où l'on travaillait peu, où chacun possedait sa propre villa aux couleurs éclatantes, entourées de grands jardins en fleur durant toute l'année; c'étaient de grandes avenues de marbre; le long de celles-ci, on entendait nuit et jour des musiques suaves. La nuit y existait-elle seulement puisque c'était la ville-lumière? Il n'y avait pas, bien sûr, de chaleur excessive. Tout y était réglé pour maintenir une atmosphère tempéreé.
>
> Kocoumbo, p. 31

He soon finds the village too small and stifling for him, thus "se considérant déjà comme un étranger, il ne se mêlait ni aux autres." These are however just the initial signs of Kocoumbo's basic ignorance and misconception about life in France. As they journey on to Marseille, the hero and his friends display the wildest illusions about their education and its applicability in France. They think that with their primary school diplomas, they will need only two, three or four years of study to qualify in whatever professional field they so desire:

> A les entendre, il fallait deux, trois ou quatre ans d'études pour pouvoir exercer à n'importe quelle profession si importante fut-elle. Tout était facile, quand on était

> comme eux diplômé de l'enseignement primaire. Ils n'avaient aucune idée précise de ce en quoi consistait le métier qu'ils visaient.
>
> Kocoumbo, pp. 56-7

Kocoumbo's naiveté is further emphasized in several other scenes; some of them minor, such as when he suggests that Les Champs Elysées are farms outside Paris, and others major, as is seen in this description of his initial reaction to Marseille:

> Donc, à partir du moment où il y mettrait les pieds, il s'interdirait tout repos et serait aux aguets. Malheur à celui qui ferait mine de l'approcher, il se rendrait vite compte à qui il avait affaire.... Face à la brute de Marseille, il saurait se défendre avec l'aide de ses ancêtres. Sitôt mis le pied sur le quai, Kocoumbo, debout à côté de sa malle, le visage courrocé, se tint immobile, dans l'attente d'une aggression. Ne voyant rien venir, il se baissa, souleva sa lourde et volumineuse malle, redoubla d'efforts et parvin enfin à la hisser sur son epaule.
> Il s'engagea dans la première rue qui s'offrait. Il allait seul, et tellement absorbé par l'idée de sa propre protection qu'il avait perdu de vue ses camarades, les avait même oubliés....
> Son visage ruisselait de sueur, les veines de son cou saillaient; il tressaillait au moindre frolement et une espèce de rage muette le prenait à la vue de la foule qui s'écoulait de tous côtés.
> Un groupe d'hommes gesticulant et jacassant venait au-devant de lui. Il lui sembla que leur rire et leurs éclats de voix le concernaient. Il se retourna pour toiser de haut l'un d'entre eux avec toute la férocité dont il était capable.... Il crut entendre des huées s'élever d'un attroupement proche. De saisissement, il laissa glisser son chapeau entre ses doigts et le vent l'emporta. Un homme se détacha de la foule afin de le lui ramasser. Kocoumbo le regardait traverser la rue, hébété. Soudain il se mit à vociférer:
> --N'approchez pas. Laissez mon chapeau! Je ne me laisserai pas faire!
> Il fit un pas menaçant en avant. Interloqué, les yeux ronds, l'homme le regarda sans mot dire, puis haussa les épaules, posa le couvre-chef par terre et s'en alla en se retournant de temps à autre sur Kocoumbo. Celui-ci avait mis le pied sur le chapeau et surveillait l'inconnu qui s'éloignait.
>
> Kocoumbo, pp. 72-3

The thematic and stylistic significance of such a passage is clear. Incorporating motifs that are common in stories dealing with the young innocent from the provinces, Loba gives us a glimpse at the kinds of adjustments Kocoumbo will have to make in France. Also, in terms of the novel's structure, such a passage conveys the nature of the protagonist's innocence in a convincing and humorous manner. In spite of some obvious use of hyperbole, we are able to see that because Kocoumbo is so lacking in knowledge about life outside his home village, he displays a tremendous amount of paranoia and insecurity as soon as he gets into the big city. It also prepares us for Kocoumbo's display of awestruck wonder when he first enters Paris. No one should really be surprised that

Kocoumbo is so impressed by such things as the Paris metro and by the general politeness of French people such as the Brigauds, the family of M. Gabe's sister.

However, soon after his arrival in Paris, Kocoumbo begins to realize his delusions about France. When he goes out on his first stroll in the French capital he is dismayed by some of the things he sees: the grey and dull atmosphere coupled with the bitingly cold weather, the lumpen activities of certain characters around rue Saint Denis and the general moral degeneracy of the whole Pigalle area. Quite appropriately, the narrator comments that during this walk Kocoumbo "continuait, malgré tout, son chemin et n'arrivait pas à trouver un rapport quelconque entre ce qu'on lui avait raconté sur Paris et ce qu'il avait devant lui" (p.91). These impressions are merely symbolic pointers to the more excruciating experiences that, in proper apprenticeship manner, the hero has to undergo in order to become an apprenticeship hero.

Kocoumbo's actual tests commence at the lycée Ananon-les-Bains. In spite of the very cordial reception given to him by the principal, staff, and some pupils, the young Ivorian immediately becomes disconcerted when he learns that the primary school leaving certificate (which the twenty one year old Kocoumbo and his compatriots had valued so highly), only qualifies him to be in the same class as twelve to fourteen year old French children. Worse, Kocoumbo gets so frustrated with his initial inability to cope with his classmates that he nearly quits school. In addition, the loneliness which he had been experiencing during the school term becomes crystallized during his first Christmas vacation in France. He also experiences racial discrimination and general insensitivity--the types of anti-social behaviour he never would have imagined to exist in France. In fact, it is because of such anti-social behaviour by a tyrant who passes himself off as the new "surveillant général" (Vice-Principal) that Kocoumbo has to abandon his studies at the lycée.

Although Kocoumbo's training within the formal educational system certainly contributes towards his overall growth, it is no exaggeration to suggest that his ordeals outside that system add even more to his acquisition of real education. When, after the

death of his father, Kocoumbo is rejected by an African member of the scholarship board in France, the naive protagonist turns to Durandeau, one of his fellow students (in fact a co-traveller from Abidjan) whom he now regards as a saviour:

> En voilà un qui n'est pas comme les autres! s'enthousiasmait le jeune homme. C'est un garçon sérieux, hardi, prêt à m'aider. Je suis sûr qu'il me trouvera un lycée ou du moins que ses leçons m'aideront à atteindre l'examen. C'est le seul asile qui me reste.... Quelle intelligence! Il réussit tout ce qu'il entreprend! Et quel travailleur! En deux ans d'études il a fini ses certificats de droit et fait sa mé par-dessus le marché.
>
> Kocoumbo, p. 151.

Judging from the manner in which Durandeau (who has actually abandoned his real name of Koukoto) usually introduces himself to other people, one would think that he veritably should be Kocoumbo's mentor. After all, from Durandeau's report, he has been successful in two baccalauréat examinations and is now studying both law and medicine. In addition, he not only has exquisite sartorial tastes but also seems quite gregarious--in fact the very symbol of civility. But as we soon see, the novelist uses the close relationship between Kocoumbo and Durandeau as the structural frame upon which the protagonist's hurdles are hung. For instance, as we see in the passage just referred to, Loba uses double-edged irony to show us further aspects of Kocoumbo's naiveté as well as to prepare us for Durandeau's subsequent villainies. Kocoumbo is genuinely impressed by what he considers Durandeau's academic and social triumphs, and he therefore believes everything that Durandeau tells him. This is the reason why Kocoumbo accepts his friend's "explanations" that he (Durandeau) had, without Kocoumbo's permission or knowledge, borrowed ten thousand francs in Kocoumbo's name from Mme. Brigaud, and that the money was stolen together with Durandeau's wallet. It is also because of his inexperience that Kocoumbo is nearly defrauded by one of the many African "brothers" (read: tricksters) who pose as impoverished students around the Latin Quarter, but who actually use their ill-gotten money to dine and dress lavishly.

As Kocoumbo continues to live in Durandeau's apartment, however, he gradually becomes educated. He starts seeing that side of Paris which he had never before

imagined. It is that side of the city where those foreign students who are either ill-equipped to pursue their studies or who are lured by the ephemeral attractions of the French capital end up joining various scoundrels and charlatans. Kocoumbo notices, for example, that François Gogodi (the runaway thief who adopts the name of Douk) is, like some of the "students" who hang around Boulevard Saint Michel, nothing but a pest to women and a rogue. Rather than being the decent and intelligent student that he purports to be, Durandeau is in reality an impostor who lives off a whole crowd of unsuspecting, naive people.

When this young confidence man and dandy is not duping young French women like Françoise and Lucienne, he is either swindling money from people such as Mme. Brigaud or kowtowing to African politicians for favours. There is no doubt that as a result of these actions Durandeau is the leading "opposant" or "faux-destinateur" in the novel. The validity of this statement becomes especially obvious when one realizes that Durandeau actually pretends to take over Kocoumbo's guardianship from Mme. Brigaud: "je vais le prendre en mains aux grandes vacances et je le ferai travailler. A la rentrée, il n'aura plus de souci" (p. 123).

It would be wrong however to suppose that Durandeau is the only character belonging to this structural category. Certain other characters such as Douk, and some other African students (especially a number of those living in the "cité des étudiants de l'Afrique noire"), and the extremely insensitive "Surveillant Général" at the lycée also belong to this category.

We know as well that, as hero of a Novel of Personal Development, Kocoumbo needs more than the "opposants" for his overall development to be complete. There must be people whose responsibility it is to eventually lead the protagonist on the right path. In this connection, M. Gabe, the retired colonial official, serves as the "destinateur." It is this old French man who assumes real parental responsibility for Kocoumbo right from the time the boy leaves for France and up to the time of his return from that country. It is

when we regard M. Gabe as the character "qui aide le héros à surmonter les épreuves" that his eventual "saving" of Kocoumbo makes sense. In other words, unless we realize that, as M. Gabe himself says at the end, he has assumed the role of Kocoumbo's father (and that such a role is consonant with that of the "destinateur" in the "roman d'apprentissage"), we will be tempted (as Dathorne) to dismiss the work's ending as contrived. What should be emphasized here is that the fulfilment of a generic imperative does not in itself guarantee aesthetic success, but a critic (such as Dathorne) who is ignorant of the generic conventions of a particular work cannot be appropriately receptive to the merits such a text might have in terms of form. Thus Dathorne condemned Loba's novel for the wrong reasons.

Mme. Brigaud and her family as well as the principal of the Lycée Ananon-les--Bains are among the group of "adjuvants" i.e. the group of relatively minor characters who also contribute positively toward the protagonist's development. These characters provide shelter and other forms of assistance for Kocoumbo and they also show genuine concern for his well being. There are however two other "adjuvants" who deserve special mention for the role they also play in the hero's life. These two characters, Abdou the medical student and Denise the factory worker, are also coincidentally members of the French Communist Party. Kocoumbo actually admires Abdou as a role model and, in order to see the reason for such admiration, we should look at the narrator's description of Abdou, especially in an environment crowded with irresponsible gawks:

> En effet, Abdou était la vivante antithèse de Durandeau. Il avait vu en Afrique la misère sous toutes ses formes et en avait été plus frappé après son séjour en Europe. Il avait souffert de constater que la mortalité infantile, imputée aux génies malfaisants par les autochtones, n'avait d'autre chose que le manque total d'hygiène; sur dix enfants, trois arrivaient à l'age adulte: la vie ne restait qu'aux plus forts. Enfin, il ne pouvait supporter sans révolte la mort en couches de tant de jeunes femmes comparables dans son esprit à ces espèces de moucherons qui meurent en donnant la vie. Aussi desirait-il avec ardeur consacrer sa vie à remédier à cet état de choses. L'Africain d'aujourd'hui disait-il, ne doit avoir ni espoir, ni honneur sans un travail acharné, ni repos, ni sérénité, tant qu'il ne sera pas sorti de son ignorance. A ses yeux, tout étudiant africain qui perdait son temps en plaisir au lieu de se consacrer à l'étude ou qui s'abandonnait à quelconque superstition était indigne et méprisable.
>
> Kocoumbo, p. 172.

Although Abdou is a "bête noire" to some of the other characters (Durandeau, Douk, and others of their ilk), he is indeed the person who, by both words and deeds, reinforces the concepts of social awareness and responsibility in Kocoumbo's mind. It is also because of such a character's influence that the reader is left with some hope that Kocoumbo will be able to serve his people well as a judge.

In spite of Denise's initial appearance as a rather dogmatic and patronizing rabble rouser, she later on provides emotional and some political support for Kocoumbo after he finds employment in Paris. The fact that after Denise's death Kocoumbo is so moved that he can no longer go back to work in the factory is an indication of the role she had been playing in his life.

If, as I have been suggesting, Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir is interpreted as a "roman d'apprentissage," it becomes easier to see how, after being exposed to such varied forms of education, Kocoumbo (who has always been good at heart) is able to put M. Gabe's generous offer into appropriate use for the Ivorian people. As with other members of its generic family, Loba's novel portrays the leading character's movement from a state of ignorance to one of self-awareness and a knowledge of the novelistic truth. It is for this reason that I disagree with Dorothy Blair when she suggests that the final scene (where Kocoumbo literally pounds the crafty and lazy Durandeau) is unconvincing.[6] I think Loba includes the scene to show how, in both literal and symbolic terms, Kocoumbo makes the final break with what could be regarded as the very symbol of his innocent and naive past. When the apprenticeship qualities of Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir are taken into account it becomes simpler to see the links between this novel and two other related works--La Souche calcinée, and Second Class Citizen.

Apprenticeship in France 11: La Souche calcinée.

La Souche calcinée,[7] the second novel by Denis Oussou-Essui, also of the Ivory Coast is, like Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir, a work which deals with the growth and education

of an uprooted young African in France. Kongo Lagou, a bright and promising pupil from the Ivorian village of Koliaklo, easily qualifies for entrance into the regional secondary school. Lagou continues to do quite well in this school until, following a new wave in the colonial territories, some of his school friends start departing for France--a country which, as in the case of Kocoumbo and others, had often been regarded as an earthly paradise.

Lagou convinces his mother (his only living parent) to send him to France where he hopes to continue his studies. For a start, things seem to be going well for Lagou in his new surroundings until he is informed about the delay in payment of his school fees. The boy assumes that the delay has been caused by an apparent failure of M. Elert (a French man à la M. Gabe, who also acts as a kind of substitute parent for Ivorian students going to France) to mail the sum of sixty thousand francs which Lagou had given to him for safe keeping.

The situation gets even worse for Lagou when he is admitted into hospital and has to be operated upon as a result of an attack of Guinea worms. Able to pay neither the school fees nor the doctors' bill and, worse still, unable to procure a scholarship, Lagou is forced to quit school and find a job in Caen. He leaves Caen in response to an invitation by a friend, Bigger, and goes to Paris where, after an exhausting and frustrating search for work, he is finally hired as a handy man in a spaghetti warehouse. Because Lagou's job takes him to all areas of the city and its surburbs, he is of course able to see and learn things from people in the various segments of Parisian society.

As he continues his stay in Paris, Lagou gets to know more about most of his former colleagues who, like himself, had gone to France without the necessary preparation and resources. Most of these students end up either doing demeaning jobs in the land of their dreams or go back to their home countries totally disillusioned and without any qualification. The protagonist is also informed that the sixty thousand francs which he thought M. Elert had swindled (and which would have been quite useful at the time they

went missing) had actually been converted fraudulently by a former colleague, Akoua, who has now done very well academically and professionally. Lagou finally becomes a night watchman-- a position which enables him to continue his studies by day and eventually to qualify as a lawyer before returning home to Africa.

On the basis of some obvious thematic and formal resemblances between Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir and La Souche calcinée we can safely speculate that Oussou-Essui was in some ways influenced by his country man Loba, but it will be more relevant to this study if at this time I concentrate on the generic similarities between Oussou-Essui's novel and at least some of the others already discussed.

The narrative of La Souche calcinée is to some extent different from the other "romans d'apprentissage" I have been dealing with because, unlike these other novels, it does not progress in a linear chronological manner. Even a text such as Oyono's Une Vie de boy where the narrative time--Erzählzeit--initially precedes the story time--erzälte zeit--we see that by the end of the introductory chapter the novelist reverts to a linear chronological sequence.[8] Although Oussou-Essui uses the third person omniscient narrator, he constantly shifts from Paris through Caen, Lisieux and on to the Ivory Coast. This writer certainly does not demonstrate the mastery of some other African writers who have presented scenes in such episodic narratives (for example, Ngugi and Soyinka) but there is no doubt that his technique is different from (though not necessarily better than) the other West African apprenticeship novel writers'. Later on in this chapter I shall take a further look at some of the similarities and differences of narrative technique among these writers but for now I should perhaps point out those literary attributes that qualify La Souche calcinée as a novel of development:

The reverberation of Loba's novel is hardly necessary to relate Oussou-Essui's work to this sub-genre, for La Souche calcinée in its own way manifests most qualities of the "roman d'apprentissage." We notice, for example, how the protagonist's lack of experience is made clear right from the beginning of the story time. In passages that are

pregnant with ironic uses of hyperbole, Lagou and his friends are made to articulate their initial perceptions of France:

> --...ce sont des rues qui filent à l'infini traversant villes et villages, commençait Baro.
> --...des maisons de pierre qui grimpent au ciel, répondait Lagou.
> --Vous parlez de.... Ah! là-bas, c'est le bout du monde, n'est-pas? intervenait Akoua. Il ajoutait, non sans fierté, les propos que son père lui avait si souvent raportés: "La-bas, les hommes portent si bien les vêtements qu'on dirait qu'ils sont nés avec: le buste droit, la poitrine bombée, la démarche tranquille; élégance! élégance!.... "
> Ecoutez! interrompait Lagou.
> "Là tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté
> "Luxe, calme et volupté...."
>
> La Souche, pp. 32-3

. These students like those in Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir, also have very high aspirations and wild dreams about how they intend to make good of their stay in France; appropriately, it is Lagou who gives expression to these dreams:

> Nous ne retournerons contents, dans sept ou huit années, vers les nôtres que si nous avons pu devenir, toi Gohi--Bi-Tra, ingénieur des ponts et chaussées, toi Tasqué, pharmacien, lui avocat; Akoua, médecin pour ne pas rompre avec les traditions familiales, et moi, le professeur des lettres que j'ai toujours rêvé d'être en voyant celui qui nous enseignait le français à Gbêhêklo....
>
> La Souche, p. 102.

Although Lagou and his friends do not go so far as to imagine that four years of post-elementary school training will automatically qualify them as professionals, the boys' ignorance and innocence are stressed by the certainty in tone with which they express their hopes. It also becomes apparent that the protagonist's distorted perception of France only gets worse when en route to Paris he visits a French friend in an upper middle class neighbourhood in Lyon. Considering that Lagou and his colleagues had constantly been misinterpreting Baudelaire's and José Maria de Heredias' poetic descriptions of European landscapes as the reality of France, it seems quite natural for Lagou to think that every part of France is like the neighbourhood he visits in Lyon. It is also suggested that this kind of naiveté about France and its people continues during his first few years at the lyceé.

Lagou's real initiation begins after he abandons his studies and goes in search of a job in Caen. It is indeed from this period that his real education starts. When he goes to the docks to see whether he can find employment, the narrator presents a scene which is in direct contrast to Lagou's previous opinion of France as a place where "tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté:"

> Quand Lagou franchit la porte, il fut cloué sur place par une forte odeur d'alcool, de tabac, de saucisson à l'ail. Des hommes affalés sur des banquettes, des bouteilles de vins rouge et des morceaux de pain débordant de leurs poches. Sans bouger, ils regardaient l'arrivant, pensant que ce noir égaré voulait peut-être un renseignement.
>
> La Souche, p. 146.

These sordid surroundings at Lagou's first place of work are really microcosmic representations of the France he soons begin to learn about. When he is finally hired as a labourer, he has to share a cubicle with another Ivorian student, Amani Adolphe, and the latter's girl friend (a situation which forces Lagou to squat all night long in a far corner of the cubicle) before going off to work at four in the morning. His experiences go farther than that however; we are told for instance that when Lagou meets his friend Bigger again in Caen, he decides to spare Bigger some details of his adventures which include:

> des activités qui l'avaient amené à rentrer dans une usine de Mondeville pour peindre au pistolet, des bidons destinés à l'Algérie en guerre [note the irony] à servir au restaurant universitaire se faisant traiter de "Nègre Gaulois" à devenir maître d'internat au pair dans un établissement public d'Arromanches, à être commis dans une ferme de Cabourg où il passait leplus clair de son temps à ramasser des pommes pour l'extraction du cidre.
>
> La Souche, p. 168.

Two major implications to be drawn from this passage are that, first of all, by being forced to move from one job to another in the way he does, Lagou is made to understand that France is no paradise; and second, that he gets a better knowledge of the country and its people as he works in all of these places. As Lagou himself acknowledges "il en avait vu des vertes et des pas mûres."

Lagou's experiences and his process of growth and development do not however end in Normandy. He acquires some other kinds of practical knowledge when he joins Bigger in Paris where, even though he is lucky to get some good accomodation, he is

faced again with the nagging problem of survival. After a series of setbacks in his quest for employment, Lagou is at last employed at the Spaghetti Noodles Company of Farrao et cie.

Oussou-Essui's choice of these divergent jobs for Lagou is significant for thematic, formal, and ultimately generic reasons. On the level of both the novel's themes and structure, we see that by making the protagonist play such divergent roles, the novelist allows the reader to see the various stages of Lagou's development. These varied roles also permit the leading character not only to be an observer and a participant in these diverse activities throughout the novel, they as well bring him into direct contact with those characters that are often so necessary in the Novel of Personal Development.

Travelling on a path familiar to apprenticeship heroes, Lagou is gradually stripped of his innocent and grandiose impressions of France. On several occasions he expresses how he comes to realize the discrepancy between the illusions he had built of France and the reality of that country as this example shows:

> Quel deshonneur que de venir en France, de traverser cinq mille kilomètres d'océan pour devenir manoeuvre! Autant rester en Afrique pour abattre la jungle africaine.
>
> La Souche, p.83.

On another occasion, he recognizes that instead of swaggering as a student in France (as he previously thought he would be doing), he is now doing the same types of jobs as the socially inferior motor apprentices who used to jump on to moving lorries in his home village. The young man also learns that generally things are not as easy as he had imagined them to be in the great metropolis:

> On exigerait de lui sa carte de travail, sa carte de séjour, un extrait de son casier judiciare, en un mot, des papiers qu'il ne serait jamais en mesure de fournir.
>
> La Souche, p. 138.

In order to see how, in spite of all of these problems, Lagou is finally able to succeed and become a lawyer (without the novelist introducing some "Deus ex machina" to resolve the problems), we should again look at those Greimasian "actants du récit" who are always present in the apprenticeship novel. Even though Oussou-Essui implies that Lagou is

partly to blame for his woes (especially for rushing off to study in France without thinking of the full implications of such a venture), I also think that Akoua, Lagou's colleague and compatriot, is largely responsible for the protagonist's troubles. In that sense, Akoua plays the role of the major "opposant" or "faux-destinateur." Akoua, of course, does not pretend to assume responsibility for Lagou (as Durandeau does for Kocoumbo), but he is still the character who, even though he is very well provided for, squanders Lagou's only income--an act which starts a whole chain of events culminating in Lagou abandoning his studies. Another character belonging to this structural category is Lagou's aunt who is merely mentioned in the text. Despite the fact that, because of traditional custom, this woman had inherited four-fifths of Lagou's late father's property, she refuses to render any assistance to Lagou when he becomes poverty-stricken in France.

Just as these rather despicable characters are indispensable to the narrative, so are those persons who genuinely help the protagonist in his bid to find the novelistic truth. In this regard, it will not be an overstatement to say that in La Souche calcinée Lagou's friend Bigger qualifies for the part of "destinateur." Bigger, whose real name is Gohi--Bi--Tra but whom friends had nicknamed after Richard Wright's famous character because of a garb he once put on, is introduced as a very fine person:

> Tout le monde l'aimait parce qu'il était de ces êtres simples et honnêtes qui inspirent confiance et sur qui on peut compter en toutes circonstances. Personne ne pouvait lui en vouloir de paraître sans défense.
>
> La Souche, p. 41.

True to this description of him, Bigger is indeed always around to give support to his friends, especially to Lagou. When Bigger joins Lagou in Caen, we are told that "Lagou se sentit revivre à nouveau en compagnie de Bigger, partageant avec lui sa chambre. C'est pourquoi il supportait très mal la nouvelle solitude où le replongea le départ de Bigger pour Paris" (p. 169). More significantly, however, it is Bigger who, even at the risk of sounding preachy, encourages Lagou to participate in political discussions about the future of Africa and hence provides some more motivation for Lagou to take his studies seriously. No wonder then that in the end it is through Bigger's efforts that Lagou becomes less

cynical and more convinced about the need for serving their country. In passing, it should be pointed out that even though Lagou's final speech about social responsibility towards one's country might sound too didactic, it is totally in keeping with the structure of the apprenticeship novel which invariably is didactic.

Several other characters also help Lagou in both the process of development and in the understanding of France and its people. Among these "adjuvants" are Yapi Kouassi, the only literate adult in Lagou's region and who paid Lagou's caution fee before the boy is allowed to go to France, Jean-Jacques, the young French man who becomes more like a brother to both Bigger and Lagou, and M. Elert, the "father" of most Ivorian students studying in France. Other friendly and helpful characters such as the principal, staff, and pupils of the lycée at Epernay, Francis the driver at Farrao et cie, Pierre Merglion Lagou's friend at Lyon are also "adjuvants."

Although Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir and La Souche calcinée do not demonstrate the density of texture or the psychological complexity which characterize some of the finest African novels, it is still regrettable that, in contrast to some texts of even more dubious literary value, very little critical commentary has been devoted to them. These two novels, together with Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen, are thematically different from most African novels because of the thoroughgoing exposés they give of the other side of African student life in Europe. Even if it were only for this reason I think it is worth examining these texts.

Apprenticeship in England: Second Class Citizen.

It has been said that of "all the women writers in contemporary African literature Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria has been the most sustained and vigorous voice of direct feminist protest."[9] While there is no doubt about the validity of this statement, one thing that is questionable is the persistent attempt by scholars to read Emecheta's Second Class Citizen only within the feminist protest tradition.[10] It would be idiotic of course to suggest

that in evaluating the works of a writer such as Emecheta (who in all of her novels deals with the role of women in various societies), one can avoid the feminist question. It is something else however to imply that this is the only aspect worth examining in her oeuvre. Because scholars have consistently seen Second Class Citizen[11] only as a somewhat flawed feminist novel, they have failed to see that it might also belong to other genres or sub-genres. For example, even though Lloyd W. Brown suggests, in his solid piece on Emecheta, that "the emphasis on individual growth and self-reliance [an apprenticeship quality, no doubt], is more fully developed in Second Class Citizen [than in In the Ditch]," he consistently deplores the heroine, Adah, in those sections where she is obviously displaying naiveté, immaturity, and ignorance.[12]

However, if Second Class Citizen were read as an apprenticeship novel, some of the seeming inconsistencies within the text would be more fully understood. Also, a look at this text as a novel dealing with an African woman's gradual and painful acquisition of knowledge about herself as a potential artist and about the themes of love, marriage and the subject of student life overseas (especially in a hostile environment) will add more weight to the feminist theme in the book. One further reason for suggesting that Second Class Citizen should be regarded as a Novel of Personal Development can be found in an excerpt from an autobiographical piece Emecheta wrote in the journal Kunapipi in 1982. The novelist describes the possible link between Second Class Citizen and two British apprenticeship novels as follows:

> Much later, many people saw some similarities of form between Second Class Citizen and Charles Dickens' David Copperfield and Great Expectations. All I can say is that I write in what I consider my own style and choose my own subjects in my own way. If there is any resemblance to the Dickensian models, then it is purely accidental. But maybe it is not so accidental because, like all secondary school children in English colonial Africa, we knew most of Dickens' work almost parrot fashion.[13]

Even a brief synopsis of Second Class Citizen demonstrates why some critics would have seen "some similarities of form" between this Emecheta novel and the Dickens texts.

Adah, the protagonist of Second Class Citizen, is portrayed as an intelligent, ambitious young girl who has to fight against considerable odds to gain an education in Lagos. As a child, she literally has to inject herself into the classroom of a friendly neighbouring teacher before she is finally enrolled in school. This is so because her parents (especially her mother) have doubts about the wisdom of sending girls to school. Tragedy soon strikes for Adah when her father dies not too long after her registration at school. She then moves into a relative's home where she is kept as a ward-cum-slave. After a life of abject misery and exploitation and also by dint of hard work and proper self-motivation, Adah is able to win a scholarship in the highly competitive secondary school entrance examinations.

As a result of a very good performance at the school-leaving examinations, the heroine is able to procure a job as a librarian at the American consulate in Lagos--a job which easily brings her the comforts of middle class life. During this same period, she meets Francis Obi, a young accounting student whom she initially agrees to marry because she thinks he will provide some necesary protection and support for her in Lagos. Looking at Adah's salary as a convenient means of financial support, Francis (with his parents' approval) decides to go and continue his studies in Britain. The idea is accepted by Adah because, in part, it provides an avenue for her to fulfil her own childhood dreams of going to study in England.

Francis goes to England and is soon followed by Adah and their three children. But, from the time she arrives in Britain Adah, like Kocoumbo and Lagou, begins to notice that that country is far different from the fairyland she had been brought up to think of. Worse, she realizes that Francis, who had always been dependent on her, has become even more manipulative in London. His lifestyle is now characterized by gross anti-social behaviour, a feeling of inferiority, laziness, and utter irresponsibility. Adah tries at first to support the family and take care of the home but it also becomes clear to her that Francis' irresponsibility towards the family is in inverse proportion to his desire to create more

children. When Adah confronts him with this obvious domestic problem, Francis becomes defensive and starts brutalizing her. The final clash occurs when, after the birth of their fifth child (at a time when Adah is barely twenty two), Francis spitefully burns the manuscript of Adah's first novel. Second Class Citizen ends with the heroine seizing independence for herself and her children and with preparations to start a fresh life at last.

As with all works belonging to the apprenticeship novel tradition, Adah's innocence and naiveté serve as generic markers in the initial sections of the story. Significantly, Second Class Citizen starts with a reference to Adah's "dream" of going to England. Using rhetoric that is quite identical to that used by the narrators in both Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir and La Souche calcinée, the narrator in Second Class Citizen mentions how Adah, with the help of her father, grows up having an exaggerated conception of Britain:

> The title "United Kingdom" when pronounced by Adah's father sounded so heavy, like the type of noise one associated with bombs. It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah's father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God's Holiest of Holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven.
>
> SCC, p.8.

The narrator points out that Adah makes a "secret vow" to herself that "she would go to this United Kingdom one day," and we also notice that Adah articulates nearly the same kind of decidedly wrong impression of the colonial metropolis (as Kocoumbo and Lagou) when she suggests that her arrival in the United Kingdom "would be the pinnacle of her ambition." If there were any doubts about the differences in point of view between the novelist and her alter ego (as is represented by the narrator), passages such as these should erase such doubts.

Adah's problems, however, go deeper than merely being ignorant of the culture of a foreign country. As descriptions of life with her husband show, this Emecheta protagonist enters into a hastily arranged and ill-conceived marriage without the least idea about the real nature of love, marriage, and the related notions of individual liberty and mutual support. This situation is so because Adah has grown up in environments where she

has been deprived of learning about or experiencing such concepts that are so vital for successful marital relationships. When Adah moves in to stay with a maternal uncle (after the death of her father), she is merely used by her rather sadistic relatives as a slave. She eventually finds a substitute home when she enters the Girls' boarding school as a scholarship student but, as is usually the case in such situations, she hardly learns anything about the real world in this "home." It is also shown that up to the time Adah and Francis get married she has neither experienced any serious love relationship nor has she ever thought seriously about the implications of marriage:

> Adah congratulated herself on her marriage. At least he was not an old baldy, neither was he a "made man" then; though there was no doubt that he was going to be one day. To Adah the greatest advantage was that she could go on studying at her own pace.
>
> SCC, p. 25.

It is important to consider the true nature of Adah's naiveté about love, marriage, and "life outside school" (as the narrator calls it), because without such a consideration it becomes quite inviting to blame Emecheta for what looks like her endorsement of Adah's seemingly amoral manipulation of Francis, especially with regard to their marriage. Lloyd Brown, for example, suggests that:

> The casualness with which Adah enters and describes her loveless marriage is the more striking when we remember her own invectives against parents who sell their daughters into loveless matches for the profit of the bride price, and even more disconcertingly, neither Adah nor Emecheta seems aware of or concerned about the apparent inconsistency.[14]

One suspects that Brown is asking Emecheta to impose a point of view that would have been totally incongruous with Adah's immaturity at the time of her wedding. It is only if we assume that the novelist is using the narrator to describe events as they should have been, instead of as they happened to Adah, that we will agree with the view that Adah should have been presented at the outset as being less dependent, less manipulative, and less manipulable.

At the time of their wedding, Adah is shown as a young woman who, with no home to live in, imagines that a seemingly ambitious and modest young man like Francis will

ultimately provide protection, shelter, and maybe love for her. It is also implied that it is Adah's artlessness that makes her equate happiness in marriage with youth and unhappiness in marriage with old spouses. Indeed it is only when we consider Adah's lack of experience at the begining that most of her subsequent shocks, disappointments, and eventual independence make sense. Adah's naiveté explains why this otherwise bright woman has to depend upon her less astute husband and in-laws (people who also rely on her for financial sustenance) for intellectual and other forms of guidance.

But, although this type of situation continues for the greater part of Second Class Citizen, it becomes obvious that by the end of the novel Adah demonstrates that in order to become the good writer that she hopes to become, she has to free herself from the exploitative relationship between herself and Francis, create her own identity, and in general try to understand human relationships better. Thus Adah asserts her independence in the end in a way which shows that she is now ready to be in complete control of her own and her children's lives. The scene is in the family court in London and Francis, who has been charged with assaulting Adah, resorts to all kinds of mean tricks (such as denying paternity of the children) in order to avoid payment of alimony. Here is how the narrator describes Adah's reaction:

> Francis said they had never been married. He then asked Adah if she could produce the marriage certificate. Adah could not. She could not even produce her passport and the children's birth certificates. Francis had burnt them all.To him Adah and the children ceased to exist. Francis told her this in court in low tones and in their language.... Something happened to Adah then. It was like a big hope and a kind of energy charging into her, giving her so much strength even though she was physically ill with her fifth child. Then she said very loud and very clear, "Don't worry, sir. The children are mine and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive."
>
> SCC, p. 191 (My Emphasis).

The finality in the tone of voice and the determined manner in which Adah decides to accept her new responsibility are decidedly different from her behaviour in most of the earliest scenes, situations in which she was invariably portrayed as a compliant character. She obviously understands now that she was totally wrong in looking up to Francis as a source of support; she also realizes that if she wants to succeed both in her creative

endeavours and in the rearing of her children she has to take full control of her life. From this moment henceforth, one cannot imagine either the narrator saying of Adah (as on previous occasions) that "she simply accepted her role as defined for her by her husband" or Adah herself relying on the untrustworthy Francis or any man for that matter in the way she had previously done.

As an apprenticeship novel, Second Class Citizen is to a large extent successful in its depiction of Adah's growth from the initial stage of naiveté and ignorance to her final stage of self-realization and independence. She starts confronting the well-known tests set for all protagonists of Novels of Development when she first arrives in England, which as we know she had always equated with heaven:

> England gave Adah a cold welcome. The welcome was particularly cold because only a few days previously they had been enjoying bright and cheerful welcomes from ports like Takoradi, Freetown and Las Palmas. If Adah had been Jesus, she would have passed England by. Liverpool was grey, smoky and looked uninhabited by humans.... But, if as people said, there was plenty of money in England, why then did the natives give their visitors this poor cold welcome.
>
> SCC, p. 39.

Adah's initial introduction to the British weather, landscape, and people is nothing compared to the other forms of initiation she goes through as she continues her stay in England. She has hardly overcome her first real shock over the legendary lack of warmth in England when she is faced with an even greater shock. The narrator describes Adah's reaction to the hovel which Francis (now referred to as the "new Francis" by the narrator) shows her as their new home in London:

> He opened into what looked to Adah like a tunnel. But it was a hall; a hall with flowered walls! It was narrow and it seemed at first as if there were no windows. Adah clutched at Titi, and she in turn held her mother in fear. They climbed stairs upon stairs until they seemed to be approaching the roof of the house. Then Francis opened one door and showed them into a room, or a half room. It was very small with a single bed at one end and a new settee which Francis had bought with the money Adah sent him to buy her a new top coat with.... She simply stared. She said nothing even when she learned that the toilet was outside, four flights of stairs down, in the yard; nor when she learned that there was no bath and no kitchen.
>
> SCC, p. 41.

The protagonist gradually learns that coming to England is not and should not necessarily be the pinnacle of one's dreams. She gets to know, through her experiences with the children's nanny, Trudy, that some British people can be just as dishonest and irresponsible as people anywhere else. Adah, like Kocoumbo and Lagou, becomes aware of the true nature of racism when, together with Francis, she goes house hunting in London. She is also exposed to envy and petty jealousy from some of her fellow Nigerians living in London. These characters (who include the landlord and landlady of the Ashdown Street house), out of spite and malice, do all they can to bring Adah down to the inferior level they have partly allowed society to relegate them to. It is thus evident that, because of their hateful attitude towards Adah, these characters (who should otherwise have been helping the young woman) are part of the "faux-destinateurs" in the novel.

It is also clear that Francis, Adah's husband, is her leading opponent. But before discussing Francis' role as an "opposant," I must refer to a basic weakness in Emecheta's writing style. As Lloyd Brown asserts, Emecheta's criticisms of African men "are often marred by generalizations that are too shrill and transparently overstated to be altogether convincing."[15] I will refer to two examples to prove this point: when Francis endorses his father's disapproval of Adah going to study in Britain, the narrator comments that "Francis was an African through and through. A much more civilized man would probably have found a better way of saying this to his wife. But to him, he was the male, and he was right to tell her what she was going to do" (p. 30). In another episode, the narrator tries to convey Francis' unwillingness to support his wife but, as in the first example, Emecheta only succeeds in conveying the impression of endorsing racial stereotypes about black men:

> If Francis had been an Englishman, or if Francis had not been Francis but somebody else, it would have worked and Adah would willingly have packed up her studies just to be a housewife.... But Francis was from another culture. There was a conflict going on in his head. What was the point of marrying an educated woman.
>
> SCC, p. 179.

Surely, Emecheta knows that selfishness and inconsideration are not innate traits of

African men nor are supportive behaviour and common decency towards one's spouse peculiar to Englishmen. But, despite these and other obvious fallacies of hasty and inaccurate generalizations, it is true that Francis is indeed the leading "faux-destinateur" in Second Class Citizen.

Using descriptions that inevitably allow Francis to degenerate into a caricature, Emecheta depicts him as being one of the most unredeemable villains in African literature. In scenes that are too numerous to elaborate upon here, Francis is shown to be self-centred, narrow-minded, venal, and in fact downright cruel. Instead of helping Adah to develop the potential which she obviously has (and part of which she uses to support him), Francis always seems to be an impediment on her route towards self-improvement. Because he is so selfish and greedy, Francis readily agrees with his parents' decision that Adah should remain working in Lagos in order to support him and his parents while he is "studying" in London. When (after out-manoeuvring Francis' mother) Adah finally joins Francis in England, she quickly realizes that if Francis had been dependent and lazy in Lagos, he becomes even worse overseas. He is shown as an irresponsible parent, spouse and student. As was mentioned earlier, he brutalizes Adah, deliberately tries to inject a feeling of inferiority into her and, when all that fails, he tries to deprive her of what she values most--her children and her potential to become a writer.

It is also true however that it is only towards the very end of the story that Adah fully recognizes Francis' absolute lack of love for her as well as the need for her own freedom. She is greatly assisted in this regard by that cast of characters who in different ways help her in her progress towards the knowledge of her self-worth. Several characters (such as Mrs. Konrad, Adah's boss at the Finchley Road library, and Mr. Okpara, the Nigerian who repeatedly urges Francis to smarten up) belong to the structural category of "adjuvants." But one "adjuvant" who is of particular note is Bill, the bibliophile from Canada. He is the character who not only encourages Adah to read African and other literary works, but who also literally guides her on the path of becoming a writer. Not surprisingly,

the narrator remarks that "Bill was the first real friend Adah had had outside her family."

The success of Second Class Citizen as a literary work rests largely on Emecheta's evocation of childhood and its concomitant problems. The work is also quite good (at times) in its depiction of the female overseas student trying to cope in a rather hostile environment. But, on balance, this Emecheta novel is inadequately structured.

In addition to the narrator's habit of making sweeping (and often negative) generalizations about Africa, there are statements which (ironically) look like negritudinal irritants in the text. This is more so because even though all evidence in the novel shows that Adah (presumably like Emecheta) thinks that London in its worst form is preferable to Africa, the narrator often laments the "peace" and "quiet" of Africa, and especially of Lagos.

Emecheta's rather blatant intrusions to pour what looks like personal venom accounts for another weakness in the work. Because the narrator is nearly always prepared only to explain ways in which Francis brings disappointment to the protagonist, we are never made to see most of the other characters in full perspective. Some characters who play important roles in the text (such as Bill and Mr. Okpara) are not developed as they otherwise should have been. Finally, as Brown has pointed out, some careful editing would have repaired sentences such as "Adah was sorry for her, particularly as, although she was beautiful in a film-star type of way with smooth, glossy skin, a perfect figure and thick beautiful hair, she was at least thirty" (p. 167)[16] or "it is a sad indication, though, of what was coming" (p. 40).

Nevertheless, in spite of these artistic flaws, Second Class Citizen and the other apprenticeship novels treated in this chapter are important for my discussion. This is not only because of their treatment of African student life overseas, but also because of the manner in which they serve as effective contrasts to Laye's Le Regard du roi[17]--a novel in which motifs and structural devices of the apprenticeship novel are used in a setting that is completely different from those normally associated with this sub-genre.

Apprenticeship in Africa: Le Regard du roi.

Le Regard du roi--the second novel by Camara Laye, the Guinean author of L'Enfant noir (1953)--deals with the education and eventual acceptance of a European who goes to Africa with pre-conceived and inherently wrong notions about that continent. Clarence, a white man of unknown origins, is first met in an African city known as Adramé. He has lost whatever little money he had through gambling, has been kicked out of the fashionable hotel where he had been staying with other whites, and is now staying in a ghetto-ish black caravanserai.

In the opening scene of the novel, Clarence is shown in a densely packed crowd waiting for the arrival of the black king from whom he hopes to get a job in order to pay back a huge amount of debt he already owes. Clarence's hope is based on the incorrect notion that the black king will automatically give him preferential treatment because of his white skin colour. When it becomes increasingly clear however that the pigmentation of his skin can no longer give him extra privileges, Clarence agrees to let a shabby, roguish-looking beggar mediate on his behalf. The beggar fails in his attempts to win favours from the king, but he and two young scamps with the bemusing names of Noaga and Nagoa become good friends with Clarence to whom they start teaching local customs.

Clarence soon gets into trouble when the black innkeeper, who had taken Clarence's jacket in lieu of payment of hotel bills, accuses him of stealing the jacket (which in actual fact had been hidden by the two boys for Clarence). The white man is brought into a kafkaesque kind of trial and is about to receive punishment from an obviously unsympathetic judge when, as a result of the ineptitude of the law officers and the wiles of the beggar and a woman dancer, Clarence and his friends escape from this charade of justice.

They agree to head south where Clarence still hopes to meet the king and obtain some favours. But the journey to the south proves irksome to Clarence; instead of being the arrogant white boss he had initially imagined himself to be, he is presented as a

helpless, vulnerable young man who literally has to be led along by the two young boys. This is so because Clarence is incessantly narcotized by the lush vegetation of the forest en route to the south. When they finally get to the southern town of Aziania, Clarence, fearful of his experience during the trek to this town, decides to stay in Aziana where he is willing to do even menial jobs and pay for his keep until the king's arrival. He is prevented from doing any kind of work, however, by the Naba, the local ruler, who provides him with a wife (Akissi), accomodation, and other creature comforts apparently for free. As Clarence continues to live in Aziana he gradually learns about and becomes accustomed to African rural life and, instead of regarding himself as being superior to Africans (as he once thought), he becomes more and more assimilated into their milieu.

Eventually, Clarence discovers that he has indeed been paying for his keep. Due to the indiscretion of the Master of Ceremonies, one of the Naba's household officials, Clarence gets to know that the beggar had actually traded him for a woman and a donkey before continuing on his journey to the south, and that the impotent Naba had been using him (Clarence) as a stud for his harem.

This discovery leads Clarence to become totally disgusted with himself and especially for the way he has allowed himself to be used. Thus, for a brief while he becomes a kind of misanthrope and decides not to see any other human being. He relents however and then visits Diallo, a local blacksmith who, like Clarence, is hoping to gain some notice from the king upon the latter's arrival. From Diallo's forge, Clarence strays into a river where he has a bizzare dream of fighting against a horde of manatees who seem both seductive and repellent. After he is awakened from this dream by another Naba official, Samba Balloum, Clarence goes to Dioki, a snake-charming clairvoyante, from whom he expects to get precise information about the king's arrival. During this visit, Clarence witnesses Dioki having a kind of sexual liaison with the snakes and this scene leads him to another vision in which he sees the king leaving the north (Adramé) for the south (Aziana).

Although Clarence now seems convinced of the impending advent of the king, he feels quite unworthy of appearing before the monarch. Matters get even worse when, on the day of the king's arrival, the Master of Ceremonies forbids Clarence from leaving his hut because, according to the Master, Clarence has done nothing to deserve the king's favour. As a result of these rebukes and also because of his own actions in Aziana, Clarence spends the initial period of the king's visit completely naked and in abject shame in the hut. But suddenly he feels drawn by the king's eyes which now seem to focus on him. Clarence then moves out of the hut and progresses very humbly towards the king who finally accepts him in his embrace.

Given the structure of Le Regard du roi as well as Laye's extensive use of symbolism and language that often have religious connotations, it is natural that the mystical and religious interpretations would have become the dominant concern of scholars writing about that novel. Questions such as those dealing with the mystery surrounding the king and his imminent arrival, Clarence's search for the king, the latter's second coming, the significance of the king's favour, his final holding of Clarence, as well as the general vagueness and confusion that sometimes shroud certain scenes in the text certainly invite metaphysical readings of the work.[18] It is erroneous, however, to assume (as some critics have done) that it is impossible to interpret Le Regard du roi in anything but metaphysical terms. For these scholars, "to get to its heart [Le Regard du roi] must be seen as an allegory, a visionary statement of an eternal truth," and conversely, any attempt to secularize this Laye novel will inevitably lead to only a partial interpretation of the work.[19]

It is of course a literary cliché to suggest that even with the author's support[20] no single method of evaluation can or should be taken as the valid manner of interpreting a literary work. I therefore intend to show in the remaining sections of this chapter that Le Regard du roi can certainly be read in a non-metaphysical and yet convincing manner. By highlighting the apprenticeship qualities of this novel I shall not only be showing the connections between this novel and other Novels of Personal Development we have

assayed, but also offer a correction to what seems like a reactionary (or at least non-literary interpretation passing off as a non-metaphysical interpretation) of Le Regard du roi by Femi Ojo-Ade. His central thesis reads as follows:

> L'histoire de Clarence en Afrique réaffirme, avec quelques diversions contradictoires, la supériorité du Blanc vis-a-vis du Noir....
> Il va de soi que les Africains aident le héros à affirmer, ou bien à maintenir sa supériorité et partant, à améliorer , à dépurer le sang africain.[21]

Ojo-Ade also gives many reasons why he thinks Le Regard du roi should be read as a work extolling white supremacy. He suggests, for example, that even though Clarence is in an unquestionably low and assailable position in Africa, he still considers his whiteness as a mark of privilege. This is why Clarence has such a negative attitude towards Africa and his African hosts. He treats the black innkeeper with unjustifiable contempt and is always degrading the country which he describes as a place where "je doute fort qu'aucune alouette ait jamais traversé le ciel" (p. 40). No wonder, says Ojo-Ade, Clarence hates the country and its people the way he does. The critic also sees evidence of white supremacy in scenes such as those describing Clarence's sexual activities in Aziana.

Departing from the standard critical opinion which suggests that Clarence is fooled into believing that he goes to bed every night with Akissi when in truth he is being used as a drugged sex machine to create mulatto children with the Naba's various wives, Ojo-Ade postulates that Clarence's actions are deliberate and are just part of a grand white supremacist strategy. Dr. Ojo-Ade contends that Clarence knows all along that he is being used for or, in fact, he is using the women to satisfy his lustful appetite, but since he does not really care about distinguishing one African woman from another, he continues to feign ignorance and pretend that Akissi simply changes her sexual strategy every night. The critic also accuses Laye of demonstrating bad faith by trying to convince the reader that Clarence is actually ignorant of what goes on between himself and the Naba's wives. Furthermore, Ojo-Ade suggests that only a superficial reading of Le Regard du roi will lead to accepance of Laye's depiction of Clarence's ignorance, especially if one takes into account the myth that no white man is ever stupid. In sum, Ojo-Ade strongly implies that

Laye is merely articulating the ideas of his generation which, according to the critic, is that group of

> jeunes colonisés, membres d'une élite en germe, [qui] réalisent avec fierté le voyage vers le metropole considérée comme un véritable paradis terrestre, où certains Blancs faisaient parade de leur supériorité et certains Noirs convaincus de leur infériorité--malgré les propos acharnés de libération et d'égalité des chefs de file--faisaient tout pour accéder au niveaux de ceux-là.[22]

However, it does not take much reading of Ojo-Ade's article, for one to realize that at least some of his premises in the essay are extra-literary and even racist, and that he mistakenly assumes that a non-metaphysical description necessarily demands a rejection of the symbols and other literary devices within the text. For instance, Ojo-Ade claims that when Clarence maintains his ignorance about all the women sent by the Naba, Laye's hero is merely being prudent; after all, according to Ojo-Ade "depuis des siècles, le Blanc s'empare de la femme noire pour démontrer sa supériorité et sa domination."[23] The absurd and inherently racist quality of such a statement is perhaps too obvious to warrant further comment. It is also obvious that Ojo-Ade dispenses with Laye's fine use of irony and other structural elements in the novel. These are some of the reasons why I think that Dr. Ojo-Ade has failed to provide a convincing alternative to those critics "qui ne voient en l'oeuvre de Camara Laye que les aspects mythiques."[24] Rather, I think that a generic consideration of Le Regard du roi as a novel dealing with the apprenticeship (read: growth and adaptation) of a young expatriate in Africa will not only give a complementary interpretation to the metaphysical ones, but will also answer some of the charges Ojo-Ade levels at Laye.

Le Regard du roi differs from the other apprenticeship novels included in this study because of the choice of both the hero and the setting, i.e. a white man being initiated into an African milieu; but the generic properties of the "roman d'apprentissage" are undoubtedly present in this novel. For instance, Laye accentuates Clarence's passivity and ignorance right at the begining of the story. Because Clarence is stuck in the huge crowd between him and the king at Adramé "il fut tenté de rebrousser chemin, mais il n'avait pas

de choix--depuis plusieurs jours déjà, il n'avait plus le choix!--" (p. 9). But Clarence is not only shown to be passive, he is also ignorant. Contrary to Ojo-Ade's assertions, Laye uses devastating irony to expose Clarence's illusions about his knowledge of local customs and about what his skin colour entitles him to. Clarence's initial encounter with the beggar will serve as an illustration:

> Clarence observa les danseurs un long moment. C'était la première fois qu'il assistait à une danse du pays; et la nouveauté, l'étrangeté un peu barbare du spectacle, avait de quoi arrêter ses regards.
> ---Ils dansent bien, dit-il finalement à haute voix.
> Un des géants noirs, à côté de lui, le toisa sans amitié.
> ---Vous appelez cela "danser" fit il aigrement. J'appelle cela "sautiller" tout au plus.
> "Eh bien, oui, ils sautillent, pensa Clarence; ils sautillent, mais ils dansent aussi; c'est certainement là leur façon de danser."
> ---Ils ne savent pas danser, poursuivit le noir; ils...
> Mais il laissa sa phrase en suspens pour cracher avec mépris sur le sol rouge.
> ---Tout à l'heure, oui, vous verrez danser," acheva-t-il après avoir craché, vous verrez danser quand le roi...
> Le roi va-t-il bientôt venir? demanda Clarence.
> ---Il sera là à l'heure fixée, dit le noir.
> ---A quelle heure? dit Clarence
> ---Je vous l'ai dit: à l'heure fixée...
> Je suis venu pour parler au roi, dit-il.
> ---Vous voulez parler au roi? dit le noir en toisant Clarence pour la seconde fois.
> ---Je ne suis venu que pour cela.
> ---Inouï! dit le noir. C'est proprement inouï. Croyez-vous donc que le roi reçoive n'importe qui, jeune homme?
> ---Je ne suis pas n'importe qui, dit Clarence. Je suis un blanc!
> ---Un blanc?
> Il s'apprêtait à cracher, mais se retint juste à temps.
> ---Je ne suis pas un blanc? dit Clarence.
>
> Le Regard, pp. 11-12.

What is remarkable about this conversation is the way Laye manipulates each character's tone of voice. Clarence is portrayed as the self-assured colonialist who imagines that he can pass judgement even on things he knows nothing about--hence the condescending tone implied in "ils sautillent, mais ils dansent aussi; c'est certainement là leur façon de danser." He also assumes of course that his white skin should automatically be a passport to privilege, but the beggar's reaction (especially as it is revealed in the rhetorical question "un blanc?") successfully undermines that assumption. But this preliminary correction by, of all people, a beggar does not teach Clarence much about his

present condition. He still insists that he wants to introduce himself to the king. It is perhaps worth quoting the conversation Clarence has with the beggar after Clarence has decided rather arrogantly that he wants to go into the king's service:

> ---Je me présenterai au roi sitôt qu'il arrivera, dit-il.
> Le noir, à côté de lui, ricana.
> ---Vous croyez ça?
> De nouveau il le toisa; il le toisait avec moins d'amitié encore que les fois précédentes.
> ---Les gardes ne vous laisseront seulement pas approcher! reprit-il.
> ---Mais alors comment ferai-je? dit Clarence.
> Il se sentait brusquement accablé.
> ---Peut-être parlerai-je pour vous, dit le noir.
> ---Vous? fit Clarence....
> Il regarda son voisin avec stupéfaction:
> c'était un vieil homme misérablement vêtu; certes un homme de haute taille, comme tous ceux qui étaient au premier rang, mais déguenillé; une espèce de mendiant.
> ---Vous êtes un mendiant! dit-il.
> ---C'est exact: mon métier est de quémander, dit le noir. Ce n'est pas un métier facile; j'ai commencé très jeune.
> "La belle recommandation que voilà!" pensa Clarence. Si les gardes devaient l'empêcher, lui qui était un homme blanc, de s'approcher du roi, à plus forte raison empêcheraient-ils ce noir en guenilles de l'interpeller. L'homme n'était visiblement qu'un vieux fou.
>
> Le Regard, pp. 13-4.

As in the earlier section, Laye's use of irony in this passage is unmistakable. It is effective not only in the way in which it exposes Clarence's egotism and ignorance but also in the manner in which it makes Clarence's process of initiation more obvious and painful later on. In the meantime however Clarence keeps waiting for the king and this situation provides some further opportunities for us to observe the protagonist's arrogant behaviour which is mainly borne out of ignorance. He thinks, for example, that the king "ne pouvait être là le roi des rois: ce n'était qu'un petit roi nègre" (p. 19). He is also annoyed when the beggar tells him initially that there are many obstacles to be overcome before any one can see the king. Clarence obviously thinks that he should be above such hurdles. These few examples show that Clarence still has a long way to go before acquiring knowledge of the novelistic truths. In order to get to the stage in the end where he is finally accepted by the king and his people, Clarence has to conquer all the obstacles (tests) in his path. This means that in the process he has to learn about such human values as

modesty, the need for relativity in passing judgement on cross-cultural matters and so on. In this sense, it is significant that just before leaving Adramé Clarence refers to the tests that await him as they journey south: "et il se demanda quel serait finalement le résultat des nouvelles épreuves qui l'attendaient."

The slow process of Clarence's education begins as he and his new-found friends (the beggar and the boys) continue their wait for the king. Even though he is initially shocked by the beggar's offer to do something for him, Clarence soon accepts that "tout déshérité que fût l'homme [the beggar], tout déguenillé qu'il fût, il avait une sorte d'autorité; et peut-être un mendiant trouvait-il accès là où d'autres n'eussent essayé que des rebuffades" (p. 27). He no longer protests at what he previously considered the beggar's "insolence" and, in fact, he admits to the beggar that he (Clarence) is much obliged to the almsman. In spite of his initial display of white supremacy (such as when Clarence thinks that his fellow whites will chastise him for carrying out the perfectly legitimate local custom of punishing some of the Naba's vassals), he becomes increasingly dependent on the beggar and the two boys who constantly have to correct him about indigenous customs and institutions. For instance, the beggar explains to the ignorant Clarence that drumming is not a simple occupation in that society and that the drummers are drawn from a noble caste and that their employment is hereditary. When Clarence is held for trial in an obvious miscarriage of justice it is, not surprisingly, the beggar who suggests a method of escape. Clarence is also able to retrieve his jacket only as a result of the boys' crafty behaviour and not because of his special status. These incidents in the north are clearly meant to remind Clarence of his common identity with all humanity, but it is during the journey to the south and his stay there that we see even more evidence of this.

Ojo-Ade interprets the effects of the numbing odour on Clarence during both his stay at Adramé and the trek to the south as Laye's way of perpetuating negative views about Africa: "En bref, l'odeur de l'Afrique est mauvaise et meurtrière."[24] Such a comment suggests the critic's obvious failure to take a work's symbolism into account even when

giving a purely literal interpretation of the work. The powerful effect of the odour on Clarence and the barriers of thorns which he imagines are always blocking his path should be seen as the obstacles this Laye hero has to overcome before he can be accepted by the king. Eustace Palmer thus presents a more cogent argument when he suggests that during the journey and the period of Clarence's stay in Aziana he "completely loses both his original will and personality." The odour of the south, instead of being a negative force, is part of what makes Clarence lose his original (arrogant and ignorant) personality. In Palmer's words:

> Clarence, once the proud and arrogant European, is now without any power of choice, and has to be borne along by the two boys, literally a man in a dream. The journey to the south is an essential part of the process of adjustment; it marks the transition between Clarence's early arrogance and the readiness with which he later settles down to African life. If he is to be assimilated to village life, and play his new role unquestioningly, both his European personality and his will must be eroded. In a sense the journey through the forest represents a process of initiation.[25]

As they proceed on the trip to Aziana it becomes more and more apparent to Clarence that, contrary to what he used to think, he is not aware of everything around him, and that he indeed has to be introduced to a lot more things than he had previously thought. The beggar stresses, for example, that if Clarence cannot see the paths on the way to the south it is mainly because "un homme blanc ne peut pas tout voir; il n'a pas besoin non plus tout voir, car ce pays n'est pas un pays de blancs" (p. 87). The narrator also describes the way in which the boy scamps guide the "blind" (read: ignorant) Clarence as if he were an uninitiated child:

> Il avance en aveugle, et c'est d'abord à un aveugle qu'il fait penser, la main tantôt dans celle de Noaga, tantôt dans celle de Nagoa. Mais pour peu qu'on observe ses traits, c'est à un enfant qu'on pense; à un enfant que ses parents trainent par des rues de banlieue, un dimanche soir, au retour d'une promenade.
>
> Le Regard, pp. 91-2.

Scenes such as this one are literal and metaphoric examples of the types of trials Clarence has to overcome. This is not to suggest however that his period of apprenticeship ends in the forest en route to the south. Notwithstanding the real and somnabulant hurdles Clarence clears in both Adramé and in the forest, we notice that even

at the time of their arrival in Aziana he still demonstrates some basic ignorance which he has to shed before he can become a part of Azianan society. By way of illustration, Clarence, with all his imagined wisdom, does not even realize (until it is too late) that he has actually been sold by the beggar and used as a breeder of mulattoes for the Naba. He also fails to understand the nature of either the charge against, or the punishment meted out to, the Master of Ceremonies when the latter indiscreetly reveals Clarence's proper task in the Naba's court.

But Clarence gradually learns that in order to be accepted he not only has to be with the people, he has to live like them. Thus, adhering to the beggar's advice, Clarence starts living like the people of Aziana; he now sees the need for cultural relativism and it therefore seems quite natural to see him wearing a boubou (gown) like the indigenous people. He does what is considered "men's work," drinks palm wine with relish and, in fact, adapts quite well to village life:

> Je me laisse vivre...se dit Clarence. Si je me limais les dents comme les gens d'Aziana, on ne verrait plus de différence entre eux et moi." Il y'avait la couleur de la peau, oui. Mais quelle différence était-ce là? "C'est l'intérieur qui compte, poursuivit-il. Je suis exactement comme eux." Et n'était-ce pas mieux ainsi? N'était-ce pas mieux que d'être [l'ancien] Clarence?
>
> Le Regard, p. 152.

It is obvious that Clarence's thoughts now are completely different from the time in Adramé when he perceived himself as being superior to the blacks there simply because of his white skin. But these varied experiences still do not qualify him for acceptance by the king. To get to that stage, Clarence must not only abandon all notions of racial and cultural superiority over the Azianians, he must also demonstrate complete contrition and humility. He shows evidence of the latter in scenes such as the one following the visit of the "Maître des Cérémonies" on the day of the king's arrival. Clarence, upon being reminded of his rather degrading sexual actions by the heartless "Maître," becomes quite ashamed and, in all humility, admits that he is unfit to see the king. He therefore remains in his hut, stripped of everything (including his clothes), and full of shame until he is finally called by the king.

It is significant that the first statement the king makes as he embraces Clarence is "Ne savais-tu pas que je t'attendais?" Although there is no hint here of literary influence, this question reminds one of the Abbé and other members of the Society of the Tower and Wilhelm Meister in Goethe's novel. Like the Abbé and his peers of the Society, the king seems to have been watching Clarence's progress within the African society. It seems perfectly logical therefore that when the novel's hero has completed his process of education, the monarch is quite willing to accept him for integration into the society.

I have tried to demonstrate why I think it is reasonable to read Le Regard du roi as an apprenticeship novel. My rationales include the novel's basic thematic pattern which shows the growth and development of a young man in a story that is imbued with the quest motif. The presence of those structural categories Greimas refers to as "actants du recit" is another reason which makes a generic reading of the text possible. If the king is seen as the "destinateur," other characters such as the beggar, the Master of Ceremonies and the boys play the roles of "faux-destinateurs" and "adjuvants" respectively.

This, of course, is not to suggest that this Laye novel should be exclusively interpreted as a "roman d'apprentissage." Indeed, as so many scholars have amply demonstrated, the novel's all-pervasive symbols, Laye's use of language, and the general pattern of the text invite religious, mythical, political, and other forms of interpretations. What should also be borne in mind, however, is the fact that Le Regard du roi is also a novel of development, dealing with the maturation of a young man who goes to a different culture and who has to learn about the whole process of adaptation and integration through his own (at times painful) experiences.

In conclusion, we can include Le Regard du roi in our sampling of Novels of Personal Development, and one way of doing this is to look (even if only briefly) at the narrative skills of the respective authors. First of all, each of these novelists deserve praise, in varying degrees, for use of detail. It is largely through their use of such detail that they are able to preserve the sense of solidity in the various societies they are

describing. It is also true that in spite of the wealth of detail in these novels, the essential points are not blurred. There is no doubt either that Laye is worthy of even more commendation for his performance in Le Regard du roi. Whereas the other writers (Loba, Oussou-Essui, and Emecheta), like Laye, succeed in depicting a young person's acquisition of knowledge overseas, he goes farther by creating structures within the text that make it susceptible to many more levels of interpretation than the other novels. Whether Laye's novel is read on the literal plane as a work dealing with growth, adjustment, and adaptation in a foreign culture, or as an allegorical piece dealing with divine grace, it is clear that by a sustained use of irony, evocative language, symbolism, and a masterful portrayal of characters, Laye has succeeded in writing a masterpiece. The other novelists may not have matched Laye's achievement but they should also be given credit for making a break from some of the regular (even over-used) themes of the African novel.

A. Notes

[1] Robert Pageard, "L'Image de l'Europe dans la littérature ouest-africain de l'expression française," in Connaissance de l'étranger: Mélanges offerts à la mémoire de Jean-Marie Carré (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1964), pp. 323-46.

[2] William V. Lawson, The Western Scar: The Theme of the Been-to in West African Fiction (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982).

[3] Aké Loba, Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir (Paris: Flammarion, 1960). All page references are to this edition abbreviated as Kocoumbo after long quotations.

[4] Oscar Ronald Dathorne, The Black Mind: A History of African Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), pp. 364-65.

[5] A.C. Brench, Writing in French from Senegal to Cameroon (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 150.

[6] Blair, p. 249. According to Blair, "this moving, dispassionate authentic document ends with one unconvincing episode [i.e. the scene where Kocoumbo pounds Durandeau], necessary perhaps for poetic justice." As was mentioned in the body of this study, I find this episode to be totally convincing and necessary.

[7] Denis Oussou-Essui, La Souche calcinée (Yaoundé, Cameroun: CLE, 1973). All references are to this edition, abbreviated as La Souche after long quotations. Oussou-Essui has also published two other novels: Vers de nouveaux horizons (Paris: Les Editions du scorpion, 1965) and Les Saisons sèches (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1979).

[8] For the distinction between narrative time (Erzählzeit) and story time (erzählte zeit), see Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 33-5.

[9] Lloyd Wellesly Brown, Women writers in Black Africa (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 35. Brown should be credited for having done the first book length study of black African women writers, but it should also be pointed out that the absence of francophone and lusophone (not to mention indigenous language) female writers is an obvious drawback in this well written book.

[10] A recent article by Katherine Frank can be seen as typical of the kind of critical reception that has been given to Emecheta's works. Katherine Frank, "The Death of the Slave Girl: African Womanhood in the Novels of Buchi Emecheta," World Literature Written in English, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Autumn, 1982), 476-97. Like Emecheta, Frank often makes some astonishingly facile generalizations about the western woman's "freedom" and the African woman's "bondage" which are at best debatable. I will not take up that debate at this stage; suffice it to say however that sociological, literary, and other types of evidence can clearly prove that the exploitation of women has not been restricted to any one race or geographical region of the world.
Frank also refers to some other recent articles dealing with the feminine question in Emecheta's works and these studies include:
Wilhemina Lamb, "Buchi Emecheta: A New Voice from Africa," Unpublished Essay. [No further information about its source].

Eustace Palmer, "A Powerful Female Voice in the African Novel: Introducing the Novels of Buchi Emecheta," New Literature Review (In Press). [No information about Vol. No. etc].

--------, "The Feminine Point of View: A Study of Buchi Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood," African Literature Today, 13 (1982),38-55.

[11] Buchi Emecheta, Second Class Citizen (London: Fontana, 1977). This novel was originally published by Allison and Busby Ltd. of London. References are however to the Fontana edition, abbreviated as SCC after long quotes.
Emecheta, like Adah, was born in Lagos. To date she has written the following: In the Ditch (1972), The Bride Price (1976), The Slave Girl (1977), The Joys of Motherhood (1979), and Destination Biafra (1982).

[12] Brown, pp. 44-8.
I should also refer to the absence of Second Class Citizen in a recent discussion of "The Female Bildungsroman in Commonwealth Literature," by Margaret Butcher in World Literature Written in English, Vol. 21, No.2 (Summer 1982), 254-62.

[13] Emecheta, "A Nigerian Writer Living in London," Kunapipi 1V, No.1 (1982), 115.

[14] Brown, p. 45.

[15] --------, p. 36.

[16] --------, p. 36.

[17] Camara Laye, Le Regard du roi (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954). All references are to this edition abbreviated as Le Regard after long quotations. Laye, who died in February 1980, also wrote his universally acclaimed autobiography L'Enfant noir (1953), several essays and short stories, another novel, Dramouss (1966), and a version of the Soundjata epic--Le Maître de la parole (1978).

[18] The metaphysical and mythical themes have been the dominant areas of critical concern as can be seen from the following examples:
Harold Scheub, "Symbolism in Camara Laye's Le Regard du roi," Ba Shiru, (Spring 1970), 24-36.

David cook, "The Relevance of the King in Camara Laye's Le Regard du roi," in Christopher Heywood, ed. Perspectives on African Literature (London: Heinemann, New York: Africana, 1971), pp. 138-47.

Palmer, Introduction, pp. 95-116.

Blair, African Literature in French. pp. 196-8.

Ben Obumselu, "The French and Moslem Backgrounds of The Radiance of the King," Research in African Literatures, Vol. X1, No.1 (1980), 1-25.

Adèle King, "Le Regard du roi 1: The Quest for Salvation," The Writings of Camara Laye (London: Heinemann, n.d.), pp. 38-48. Dr. King's text, which I suspect was published in 1981, is the first real monograph on Laye's oeuvre.

Lawson, "The Radiance of the King: A Sufi Path to Spiritual Coherence," (See Note 2), pp. 46-54.

Kenneth Harrow, "A Sufi Interpretation of Le Regard du roi," Research in African Literatures, Vol.X1V, No:2 (Summer 1983), 135-64.

[19] See, for example, Palmer's Introduction, p. 95.

[20] In an interview with Irmelin Hossman, Laye emphasized the religious theme in Le Regard du roi by claiming that if he had written that work from a Kafkaesque perspective Clarence would not have seen God. See Irmelin Hossman, "Entretien avec Camara Laye," Afrique, No. 26 (July 1963), 56. We also know however that in many instances we have to trust the tale perhaps more than the teller.

[21] Femi Ojo-Ade, "Question de supériorité blanche: une lecture contemporaine de deux romans de Camara Laye," Peuples Noirs/Peuples Africains, 19 (1981), 60-94. See in particular, p. 73.

[22] --------, 64.

[23] --------, 71.

[24] --------, 91.

[25] Palmer, Introduction, p. 102. Palmer also acknowledges his debt to A.C. Brench's Writing in French .... (above note 5).

VIII. A Portrait of a Young Nigerian as an Artist

There are several reasons why it is important to look at Ben Okri's The Landscapes Within[1] in a chapter all by itself. The first stems from the manner in which we have grouped the various apprenticeship novels for examination. It is evident that, regardless of chronology, I have tried to combine several Novels of Personal Development which display strong thematic affinities; hence the combination of such obviously thematically-related novels as Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Une Vie de boy, Les Frasques d'Ebinto and The Torrent, Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir, and Second Class Citizen. It is clear with The Landscape Within, however, that in spite of the novel's portrayal of those structural qualities that mark it as an apprenticeship novel, its major theme and setting make it impossible for us to link it with the other novels in the preceding chapters.

Okri's text is different from the other West African apprenticeship novels because, like Joyce's Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man (on which, at times, it seems consciously to have been modelled),[2] it portrays not only the development of a young man but also the early leanings and growth of an artist--a Künstlerroman in German literary terminology. This novel is also unique in the way Okri seems to have used influences from writers as different as Joyce, Armah, Achebe and Ngugi to give a new twist to the Novel of Personal Development in West Africa.

The Landscapes Within deals with the process of maturation of a young, bright, sensitive and lonely artist as he tries to survive the general philistinism, corruption and inhumanity that characterize big city life in Lagos, Nigeria. As a child, Omovo had moved with his parents from Igbo land after the Nigerian-Biafra civil war and had progressed quite well in school until he is prevented from attempting the all-important school certificate examinations because of his father's failure to pay the necessary fees on time. Life becomes increasingly miserable for the young man when, not long after the death of his mother, his father re-marries and, as a result of domestic tension, Omovo's older brothers--Okur and Umeh-- are kicked out of the family fold by their father.

Although after the usual struggle Omovo eventually finds a job and though he does have some friends (such as "Dr." Okocha, the painter, Keme, the journalist, and Okoro, the young civil war veteran), he becomes a lonely and sad person who finds solace only in painting and in the company of his lover-cum-friend Ifeyinwa, a neighbour's wife. Omovo and Ifeyinwa become attracted to each other because of some identical qualities (they are both sensitive, introverted, impressionable, intelligent and great lovers of both literature and the visual arts), and also because they both feel trapped in a morally corrupt and physically degrading environment. Ifeyinwa has been forced into a life of misery because she was pushed into a loveless marriage after her father's suicide.

In scenes that clearly echo Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born[3] (on both the literal and symbolic levels), Okri shows how Omovo becomes more and more aware of the extensive malaise that pervades society. But, unlike Armah's anonymous protagonist ("the man") who merely drifts in an aimless and helpless manner in a sea of corruption, Omovo thinks that not only can he see through the wholly materialistic nature of the society but that he can even depict the dirty quality of the corrupt society on canvas. He increasingly learns, however, that for his actions to be more meaningful he has to do more than merely express a symbolic disgust with corruption. Thus, by the end of The Landscapes Within Omovo, who is often depicted as being quite passive and as a person nearly always given to reverie, is shown as someone who is ready to have a more down-to-earth assessment of events around him and to act accordingly. After a series of terrible, even tragic, events (such as when he is forced to resign from his job because he dares display some modicum of integrity, or when Ifeyinwa who, while trying to escape from her brutal husband, is foolishly killed in an insane war between her village and a neighbouring village), the protagonist finally sees the need to forge a new vision of reality. Inspired by a poem written by his brother Okur, Omovo suggests (albeit implicitly) that it is not enough for him as an artist to be merely cognizant of the filth around him; he should be ready to act. Such in bare outline is the plot of The Landscapes Within.

As was mentioned earlier, the influence of Joyce's Portrait on this novel is unmistakable: we see this not only in the choice of a young artist as hero but also in several other distinct ways. For example, one of the quotations Okri uses to preface the text is Stephen Dedalus' aspiration, at the end of A Portrait, to "go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." This quotation is important because, just as Stephen uses it to express the belief that for him to survive as an artist he has to free himself from the shackles of church, family and country, so does Okri use it as a pointer forward to the end of the Landscapes Within where Omovo will suggest that for him to survive as an artist he needs to have a more realistic and less fanciful approach to things and events around him. The episodic narrative and the solitary nature of the hero also recall Joyce's method of narration and portrayal of the hero in A Portrait.

All this is not to suggest that The Landscapes Within is a mere transplant of Joyce's text into an African environment. On the contrary, we can say that one of the hallmarks of Okri's writing is the way he uses and goes beyond a mosaic of literary sources to create his own masterpiece. One of the most literary of young African novelists, Okri shows familiarity not only with Joyce but with other African writers such as Armah, Achebe, Soyinka, Ngugi and Ousmane. But, together with Joyce's Portrait, Armah's The Beautyful Ones seems to be the most important influence on The Landscapes Within. It is in fact when we compare Armah's description of his hero, the man, with Okri's portrayal of Omovo that the latter's process of development becomes clear; hence such a comparison allows us to see the apprenticeship characteristics of The Landscapes Within in a better manner. It is thus appropriate to summarize Armah's characterization of the man.

The man is depicted as a character who has absolute integrity and as someone who is definitely beyond reproach in a society crowded with moral degenerates. Exposed to molestation and ridicule by his mother-in-law and quiet but pointed indictment by his wife

and children, he refuses to be caught in the web of corruption that seems to embrace almost everyone in the novel. It is also manifest however that despite his high ideals the man is too weak to be a real hero. Though he tries to rise above the corruption that evidently surrounds him, he neither seeks to understand its nature nor to actually fight against it. The scene on board the bus where the conductor, who has given the man and other passengers short change, imagines that he has been caught by the man can be seen as a microcosmic representation of Armah's portrayal of his leading character. The conductor, fearing that he has been caught and will thus be exposed by the man "whose pair of wide-open staring eyes met his," attempts to bribe the man before he discovers that the man has actually been sleeping. Adopting a very serious and self-righteous pose, the conductor wakes up the man, showers him with invectives and finally kicks him out of the bus.

The importance of this episode lies in the way it illustrates how a lack of positive action by decent people such as the man actually encourages corruption to continue. Certainly, the man is asleep for the greater part of this episode (and hence cannot do anything), but his somnabulant behaviour in this scene is symptomatic of his overall pattern of behaviour. Although he is fully aware of the extent of corruption in Ghanaian society, he generally behaves as he unwittingly does in this scene. He literally and symbolically sleeps in the midst of all the moral decay. It is not surprising therefore that he does not show any sign of development in the course of Armah's novel.

Though Omovo resembles the man in many ways, he demonstrates by the end of The Landscapes Within that he has grown out of the sleepy and passive state that characterizes the man's behaviour. In other words, there is the usual apprenticeship movement from a state of passivity to one of action in Okri's novel. Like the man, Omovo demonstrates an inability to act for the greater part of the text. Even though he is very much aware of the putrefying nature of the society, he does nothing to stop the corruption and decay.

There are several ways in which Okri reveals Omovo's awareness of and disgust with the corruption around him and, like Armah, the Nigerian novelist takes full advantage of a central symbol--scum-- to communicate his revulsion at the moral decay in Lagos. Omovo's attention is constantly being drawn towards some scum or other and it is therefore quite in place that the scum ultimately becomes the outlet through which he thinks he can fight or at least express his loathing for the corrupt in society. Inspired by a greenish scum close to their house, Omovo initially makes a scum painting which he captions Related Losses. This picture is however stolen and he then decides to paint "a large vanishing scumscape--snot coloured." But this painting labelled Drift nearly gets him into serious trouble when he displays it at an art exhibition. He is harangued by a government official for being "a reactionary," who wants "to mock our independence... great progress...us."

It should be stressed however that though Omovo might seem to be taking a stand against corruption in such a scene, his action is not anything that is carefully planned or even thought out. The fact of the matter is that in spite of his high ideals Omovo is initially too wrapped up in his own thoughts and too submissive to really become an opposing force to corruption at this stage. Several incidents can serve as illustrations of the protagonist's docility: in one instance Omovo is witness to a scene in which some children unnecessarily taunt and in fact beat up a small goat, apparently with the silent approval of some adults standing close by; he tries to stop the children but he is soon cowed into silence and inactivity when one of the grown ups ask in a rather harmless manner "wetin" (what is it)? Like the man, Omovo is just too feeble to act. Thus even when Ifeyinwa's husband jealously and rashly destroys the painting Omovo had been making of Ifeyinwa, or when his portrait is illegally seized at the art exhibition, Okri's hero does nothing but mutter a few words of weak protest. When he does try to act he imagines that he can use his painting to solve life's problems:

> After his mother's death painting became a little world full of his bizarre feelings. Now it was something of a passion, a means to explore the deeper, more

> unconscious meanings and miasma of his life and the landscapes about him. His painting was a part of his response to life; a personal prism.
>
> Landscapes, p.85

The novelist seems to make the point though that Omovo is using his art as a means of escape and that he needs to show more conviction and develop a more realistic approach towards life's problems if he really is to succeed in contributing to moral, social and political progress.

But, in spite of Omovo's initial display of passivity, we notice that by the end of The Landscapes Within he starts showing the need for more positive action--thereby exhibiting some evidence of growth. We will use two identical scenes from The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born and The Landscapes Within respectively as illustrations of this assertion. The first focuses on the encounter between the timber merchant and the man at the man's place of work--the railway station. When the merchant attempts to bribe the man for favoured space allocation the man, of course, refuses to accept the bribe but, as he himself admits, he does not even know the reason for his refusal to accept the money. Omovo, on the other hand, not only refuses to accept a bribe in the chemical company where he works, he decides to stand up against corruption before the end of the story. He in fact lets some of those who are involved in such corruption know what he thinks of them. After he is forced to resign, ostensibly for failing to appear at work for three days without sick leave (even thought he has actually been sick), he brings to the notice of the cringing puppet of an office manager that he knows that he is being fired because he demonstrates a rare quality in the office--moral rectitude:

> I can see right through your pretences at good office and public relations. You don't have to try any further to make me frustrated. Yes, the company is accommodating, after all it is international and you are a very civilised man and very very clean--a scum.
>
> Landscapes, p.253.

It is obvious from an episode such as this one that Omovo is beginning to comprehend that in such a society he has to do more than merely express an abhorrence for corruption on canvas; he realizes that he has to act. (One cannot imagine the man taking such a principled

stand in a conscious manner).

The protagonist also demonstrates an awareness of the need for action when he promises to read a poem by his brother Okur (a poem which he says "holds a lot for me"), to his friend Keme. Even before reading the poem Omovo mentions to Keme that his experiences have been teaching him (Omovo) something else:"It's about surviving, but it's more about becoming a life-artist." It is significant that Omovo should choose Okur's poem which seems to be stressing the need for a more unromantic way of looking at the world as his final watchword. According to the persona in the poem, as a little boy, he used to roam down the beach looking for "bright pebbles" and "strange corals" but at times he also found other things "like half-defaced sketches on the sand/ painting a way through the tormented seas" (p.286). I think that Okri is implicitly suggesting that Omovo has now realized that he had previously been unable to confront some of life's problems because he had not been prepared for all its vicissitudes. Now, however, the protagonist knows that there are not only the bright spots which are represented by the "bright pebbles" and "strange corals" but also some rough terrain--symbolized in the poem by the "half-defaced sketches"--which might eventually lead to some good.

There is no doubt that Omovo's personal experiences contribute to this awareness, but it is also true that there are certain characters who are partially responsible for his growth. Dr. Okocha, the old painter, is obviously one such character. He is the one who provides the necessary motivation and encouragement for the young man to continue his painting and who also correctly reminds Omovo about the need to face reality:

> You feel things too much. You have a truly broad vision. It is such visions that make great works. But they are no substitute for the real life. Omovo, I have known you for some time now. I like you. Try and live, try and act when you should. I don't know.... It's always a duty to try and manifest whatever good visions we have.... In dreams begin responsibilities. An Indian poet said that.
>
> Landscapes, pp.118-9

It is Dr. Okocha who in the end is able to convince Omovo to face the truth, especially after nearly all seems lost to the young artist. Omovo almost has a psychological breakdown when (at almost the same time) he learns of both his father's arrest and the

death of his loved one, Ifeyinwa. But, as usual, Dr. Okocha is around with a helping hand and he prods Omovo to adopt a more positive or even life-embracing approach to his calamities:

> Remember your responsibilities, remember. Are you going mad? Madness is a stupid escape, eh, it is a stupid escape. What's the matter with you?
> Landscapes, p.278

The journalist Keme is another of Omovo's friends who helps him on the road to progress. If Dr. Okocha is remarkable because of the way he lends psychological support to the protagonist, Keme should be mentioned because of the manner in which he guides Omovo on the path towards moral and social responsibility. As a character who always shows concern for social justice and probity he serves as a positive complement to Omovo and indeed as one of the moral positives in the text.

Because the didactic strain is never absent from the novel of apprenticeship, it seems totally in place for Okri to use certain other characters and symbols to portray and condemn corruption, hypocrisy and other such vices in Lagos society. These characters (most of whom qualify as "opposants") include Omovo's father, their neighbour Tuwo, Omovo's office manager Mr. Akwu, and a host of others. Instead of offering guidance and leadership to his family, Omovo's father merely becomes a source of dissension and destruction. Tuwo and Mr. Akwu are also hypocrites; they practice the exact opposite of what they preach. For instance, Tuwo, while claiming to have Takpo's best interest at heart tells Takpo that the latter's wife Ifeyinwa has been having an affair with Omovo--a story which only leads to Omovo receiving a severe beating by hired thugs but to Ifeyinwa's eventual death--when in actual fact Tuwo himself has been having an affair with Omovo's step-mother, Blackie. The same can be said of Mr. Akwu who, while engaged in the most blatant form of corruption and nepotism in the office, exhorts and harangues Omovo about hard and decent work for the company.

In proper apprenticeship manner, The Landscapes Within is replete with irony. Okri uses several events and episodes to satirize the false values that seem to be the norm in

that society, for example his description of the gathering at the art exhibition:

> ...the whole place reverberated with ceaseless streams of murmurs, shouted conversations, steamed speeches, clinking glasses, throaty monologues, octaves of borrowed accents, screeching pretences and, raging in the background, Walton's "Belshazzar's feast."
> He felt lost amidst the dense clutter and crowding. Somewhere in the dead centre of the ceaseless collective clamour was a child screaming. He pushed his way through fat women, spitting women, pretty women, tall bearded men, nondescript men, stammering men, sharp, neat university satellites; through stinging sweat smells, fresh perfumes, jaded aftershaves, mingled farts. Drinks were spilt, conversations grooved, textbook theories on the derivations of healthiness of modern African art were flung about like mind traps--and the child in the dead centre screamed even louder.
>
> Landscapes, pp.43-4.

This passage, which vaguely reminds one of the opening of the writers' club exhibition in Achebe's A Man of the People , is not only representative of Okri's general style, it displays some of his most frequently-used symbols. We are impressed, of course, by the way he uses language with economy to throw his ironic barbs at high society's foibles (pretentious behaviour, ostentation, hypocrisy and so forth), but what makes this description even more salient is Okri's use of imagery and symbols. As on other occasions, there is the image of the scum (though not explicitly referred to as such) which is symbolic of the rotten nature of society and that of the individual who is entrapped by authorities who just do not care--as we see in the way the child is completely ignored by adults who are indulging in the most banal of conversations. It is needless to emphasize that the child-adults relationship here is symbolic of the broad electorate-rulers relationship in the larger society. Okri also deserves praise for his suggestive use of language; taut and at the same time unpretentious, it often succeeds in conveying the right picture or image, most appropriate for a novel about a painter:

> Dr. Okocha, as he was fondly called, was thickset like a wrestler. His face was strong and sweaty and his massive forehead was a deep dry brown. His small nose, snub and blunt, repeated the curves of his rather large, friendly lips. He was reminiscent of some crude bark-brown paintings of Igbo wrestlers. He had reddish-brown-white eyes that were piercing in their depths and over which were thick bushy eyebrows. His hair was thinning and had white straggling strands. A brown threadbare agbada covered his thickset frame and made him seem shorter than he really was.
>
> Landscapes, p.13

Another artistic virtue demonstrated in The Landscapes Within is a very fine handling of dialogue. In fact Okri's conscious use of a variety of language is something that gives this novel a particularly Lagosian flavour. The blending of Pidgin (spiced at times with some Yoruba expressions) and different levels of English (including those deliberately borrowed from cheap thrillers by James Hadley Chase) at strategically-convenient positions is one method Okri successfully uses to develop his varied characters.

It is perhaps fitting that we conclude this discussion of The Landscapes Within by referring once again to the need for more generic studies in African literary criticism. Had we not investigated the tradition of the Novel of Personal Development in Africa in more conventional works, it is highly improbable that we would have been sensitive to Okri's use of some of the genre's elements to shape his narrative. Genres exist to cue response and, for reading a writer steeped in both the African and European literary traditions like Okri, it becomes even more imperative for the critic to be alert to certain generic pointers that might be present in the text.

A. Notes

[1] Ben Okri, The Landscapes Within (Harlow Essex, U.K.: Longmans, 1981). This is the edition I shall use and I shall abbreviate it as Landscapes after long quotations. Okri, who is a student at the University of Essex, is poetry editor of West Africa and author of another novel Flowers and Shadows (1977).

[2] As is pointed out later in this chapter Okri not only uses a quotation from Joyce as part of his preface, he also seems to have created his hero partly from the model of Stephen Daedalus.

[3] Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born (London: Heinemann, 1968). All references are to this edition.

IX. Conclusion

As my point of departure I chose to look at 1) the controversy surrounding the need for and especially the role of generic criticism in literature and 2) some reasons why I think it is more appropriate to describe the texts examined in this study as Novels of Personal Development than as Bildungsromane. I had to look at these issues in some detail not only because of their relevance to literary history and criticism but more importantly because of the manner in which they are linked to some of the major problems concerning the evaluation of the African novel.

Although critics of African literature generally demonstrate an awareness of the interpretive and other functions of generic criticism, they have, in most instances, failed to take full advantage of the possibilities of that critical method. I have therefore tried to highlight instances in which a generic approach might not only be useful to scholars engaged in the processes of literary re-construction, interpretation and evaluation, but might also help in clarifying literary relationships among several works (African and non-African.)

I have also shown, by way of illustration from several texts that if we use the less rigid but generically acceptable term of Novel of Personal Development to define and describe certain African and European novels, it becomes easier to see the close literary connections among texts that would otherwise have seemed quite unrelated. As a result of such an assertion a few questions that are of particular importance to the criticism of Arican fiction pose themselves: if the Novel of Personal Development is indeed a type of African novel, what has been the role of literary influence? What implications does such a (comparative) generic approach have for the overall criticism of the African novel?

In order to answer the first question I should reiterate at least some of the major characteristics of the apprenticeship novel. It is generally agreed that because the notion of Bildung (overall, harmonious development) of a young person remains a central element in the Bildungsroman, and also because the emphasis on the quest for self-culture is so

paramount in this type of novel, the Novel of Personal Development cannot be seen as being identical to the Bildungsroman. There are other features, both thematic and stylistic, which also help to give a clearer definition of the Novel of Apprenticeship. These generic ingredients include: the themes of education, initiation and growth, the journey and quest motifs, a conscious use of irony (at times double), and the portrayal of an antagonistic relationship between the protagonist and at least one character with whom he is supposed to be close (such as a family member, for example). If we accept that these attributes are some of the most vital thematic and formal qualities of the "roman d'apprentissage," it becomes evident that those West African novels we have examined in this study belong to that sub-genre. Does this mean that this type of novel (which had its origins in Europe) now has its analogues in Africa? The answer to this question is positive, but it also means that we have to look (albeit briefly) at the problem of literary influence and the concomitant question of originality.

Since the mere mention of the notion of influence is bound to generate heat in some circles, I should refer to some words of caution offered by Bu-Buakei Jabbi in connection with the concept of literary influence and at least one of its uses in criticism:

> One might say, for instance, that in pointing to the influences upon work or a body of literature one is merely identifying those forces and factors that seem to have helped in shaping the character of that work or canon as we have it in extant form. Such a view might then also specify, among other things, that a claim of influence is not an attribution of causation; for to claim that any work of literature is an outgrowth from an identified influence would appear to overstate the case beyond the issue of influence as such.[1]

It is important to bear this cautionary statement in mind because though all of the apprenticeship novels discussed have exhibited some definite instances of literary influence, it would be virtually impossible for anyone to prove any kind of direct causal relationship between the various emitters and receivers.

Richard Wright's influence on Beti, for example, is seen in Beti's consistent and positive portrayal of young people in his oeuvre, but there is nothing to suggest that characters such as Beti's Denis or Jean-Marie Medza are merely African reproductions of

Wright's Richard or Bigger. This is also true of the other writers discussed; indeed, as Buchi Emecheta suggests, it is nearly inevitable that, given the type of education acquired by most African writers using European languages, they will directly or indirectly be influenced not only by their home traditions but also by European literary traditions.[2]

But, although it is safe to speculate (as I have done) that most of these writers were influenced by both African and European literary traditions, it will take a more detailed study (and one specifically designed for that purpose) to show the exact nature of influences in these works. I have also been circumspect in proferring claims of literary influence because of the manner in which such claims--especially when they are made on the basis of literary affinities--can lead to misinterpretation. For example, one reason why Eustace Palmer misreads Mission terminée as a picareque novel is because he misconceives Beti's prefatory disclaimers as borrowings from Fielding, when in actual fact Beti got such a technique from the Beti people of his native Cameroon.[3] We therefore cannot afford to underestimate the role of independent (and identical) development, especially if we grant (as I think we should) that the social conditions which gave rise to the Novel of Personal Development and other related novel forms in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe are quite similar to those in Africa of the post 1950s. In examining these texts I have also borne in mind certain observations one critic recently made on the use of melodrama by the Cameroonian dramatist Victor Musinga:

> ...whatever the aesthetics or forms involved they are ultimately not the property of a race. Rather, they are products of a range of possibilities generated by specific social conditions which, in their general outlines if not in their particularities, result in explicable coincidence.[4]

What I have therefore tried to emphasize is not so much the fact that Emecheta was influenced by Dickens, Laye by Kafka, Oussou-Essui by Loba (who in turn seems to have been influenced by the French realists such as Stendhal and Balzac), or Okri by Joyce and Armah, but that regardless of source of influence, these writers have, in varying degrees, created convincing and authentic African versions of the Novel of Personal Development.

These novelists have all used the basic theme of the growth from adolescence to adulthood to probe into more wide-ranging subjects: anti-colonialism, religious hypocrisy, and dogmatism, the distinction between mere literacy and genuine education, the positive and negative effects of the formal school system, the processes of development and education of a young person living in a foreign land, and the growth of a young artist in a philistine, mercantile African society.

To conclude, I must once again stress some of the advantages of using a comparative generic approach. First of all a study such as mine reinforces the view that genres are mutable. It demonstrates that the Novel of Personal Development undoubtedly had its start in Europe but that it has also spread or appeared with the inevitable modifications that accompany a genre's development in other parts of the world (either through influence and adaptation or through independent genesis due to similar social conditions). The comparative generic approach also sheds more light on the kinds of literary relationships that might exist among texts which have hitherto not been considered together (Le Regard du roi, Second Class Citizen, and Kocoumbo, l'etudiant noir, for example). It is especially important to underline this point when we realize that even a very recent study of "The Bildungsroman in Afro-American and Afro-Carribean Fiction,"[5] seems to imply the non-existence of either the Bildungsroman or its generic relatives in Africa. I also think that this type of criticism is useful not only in helping critics recognize those signals that are necessary for a correct interpretation of a literary work but also in pedagogy.

Since the apprenticeship novel often deals with nearly all aspects of adolescent development (physical, mental, emotional etc.), it is conceivable that if some well-written apprenticeship novels were included in high school lists they might help stimulate the reading habits of adolescents who, it is generally agreed, are becoming less and less interested in reading literary texts. One can imagine that secondary school students in various West African countries who read the varied apprenticeship novel descriptions of adolescent

activity and of the nature of the various school systems (from the viewpoint of their imaginary peers) will not only be entertained but will be able to understand and perhaps appreciate at least some aspects of literary studies. One should also point out that since certain European Novels of Personal Development--David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Le Rouge et le noir and Sons and Lovers--are among the favourite texts in the General Certificate of Education (Grade Twelve and Fourteen) syllabi in Africa, it might become easier for students reading these texts to notice the similarities and differences in style and themes of various African and European novels belonging to the same generic family. Such a reform or curriculum will hopefully assist students in developing a more objective approach to the "African vs European literature" debate that has plagued the criticism of African literature for such a long time.

Generic criticism is not supposed to be and cannot be a panacea for all of the problems surrounding the explication of African literature. There can be no doubt however that if scholars and students pay more attention to its use, they will not only be able to avoid some of the unnecessary interpretive problems and even misinterpretations (often created by use of wrong critical criteria), but will also be able to make better (and eventually more literary) connections between African texts and their global counterparts. In other words, studies focusing on the varied types of novels in Africa (detective, picaresque, development etc.) will help reinforce the idea that African literature does not exist in a ghetto walled in by the themes of politics and tradition versus modernity, and that it is indeed a literature tractable to methodologies which will genuinely place it in world literature.

A. Notes

[1] Bu-Buakei Jabbi, "Conrad's Influence on Betrayal in A Grain of Wheat, Research in African Literatures, Vol. X1, No. 1 (Spring 1980), 50-51.

[2] Buchi Emecheta, "A Nigerian Writer Living in London," Kunapipi, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1982), 115.

[3] Palmer, Growth, p.143.
See also "Mongo Beti," in Littérature africaine, No. 5 ed. Roger Mercier et al. (Paris: F. Nathan, 1964), p.4.

[4] Stephen Arnold, "A Comparative View of the Career and Aesthetic of Victor Musinga, Cameroon's most Popular Playwright," in Toward Defining the African Aesthetic. Proc. of Annual African Literature Association Conference, 9-12 April 1980 (Washington, D.C: Three Continents Press, 1982), p.70.

[5] Geta LeSeur, "The Bildungsroman in Afro-American and Afro-Carribean Fiction: An Integrated Consciousness," DAI 43 (1983), 8300858 (Indiana).
Although LeSeur seems to ignore (or is unaware of) the presence of the Bildungsroman in Africa, I must say that from the look of her abstract she seems to have made a comprehensive sweep of the genre in the Afro-American and Afro-Carribean literary worlds. It is needless to emphasize that her study points to even more avenues for research on the subject.

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